

Western Montana Resource Advisory Council
February 22, 2006
Minutes

RAC Members Present: Sue Marxer, Garry Williams, Robin Cunningham, Dan Lucas, Richard Young, David Schulz, Ben Deeble, Rob McCulloch, Mitzi Rosillon, Dennis Phillippi, Jack Kirkley, Pat Flowers

RAC Members Absent: Francis Auld, Donna Tate McDonald, Joyce Ann Thompson

BLM Staff: Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Manager; Rick Hotaling, Butte Field Manager; Tim Bozorth, Dillon Field Manager; Marilyn Krause, Becky Zurcher, and Brad Rixford, Butte Field Office

Guests: Rob Brooks (MT FWP)

Welcome

Marilyn Krause welcomed everyone to Butte. Some of the field managers were not able to attend the November meeting, so introductions were made.

It was noted that two of the RAC members would be leaving at the noon break. Marilyn mentioned there were additional handouts for anyone interested: The Noxious Weed Quick Reference Guide and the Aquatic Weeds handout.

Nomination period now open:

Marilyn noted that the nomination period is now open for new RAC members. The theory is that if nominations are earlier, people will get appointed earlier. Applications are available for anyone interested. March 27th is the deadline for applications.

- Unfortunately terms are expiring for Sue Marxer and Rob McCulloch. They have served two consecutive 3-year terms and they are not eligible for re-appointment. So there will be an opening in grazing and minerals.
- Donna McDonald's term is expiring. She is eligible for reappointment, but has chosen not to. That will be another opening in Category 1.
- Terms expire for Richard Young and Dan Lucas in September. They are eligible for reappointment. Dan Lucas has indicated he would like to be reappointed. Richard Young needs to let Marilyn know if he would like to be reappointed.

Sue Marxer: asked for clarification on the deadline date for applications and clarification on the openings (grazing, outfitting, and minerals).

Field Office Overviews

Nancy Anderson - Missoula Field Office:

The Missoula Field Office is currently working on the Hoodoos Watershed which covers approximately 53,000 acres. Scoping letters were sent out the end of December and then in January two open houses were held: one in Helmville and one in Deer Lodge. There were about 20 people between the two areas. Those comments are being gathered up and then the Field Office will start the EA (Environmental Assessment). They plan to have the EA completed in April.

A scoping letter was sent out in January concerning a right-of-way (ROW) request in the Fred Burr Creek area of Granite County (south of Philipsburg). The request was from the county, and is for a ROW through 80 acres owned by the BLM, that will access the backside of Discovery Ski Area. RAC members should have gotten a copy of the scoping letter. The public comment period ended February 15, 2006.

There was more interest in that ROW than anything the Missoula Field office has done in a long time. The Field Office will be starting their EA this spring and working through that process.

QUESTIONS:

Pat Flowers: Do they want to develop access to the backside of Discovery?

Nancy Anderson: Yes, in the future. We want to get together with the Forest Service to look at what they are doing with Discovery. The road will also access some private land in the area; Phillipsburg is strongly supporting it.

Pat Flowers: Is the back side of Discovery on Forest Service or does BLM have a fair amount of it?

Nancy Anderson: We only own this 80 acre strip, and then I think it's mostly private.

Dan Lucas: Discovery is on a special use permit on the forest. The Forest Service did a land exchange several years ago for the big horn habitat at Lost Creek and there were a number of sections in Granite County that were put up as part of that exchange and Sec. 18 went to RY Timber. Peter Pitcher, who owns Discovery, bought Section 18 and now he would like to have public access to Section 18.

Nancy Anderson:

Work is continuing on the Blackfoot Community Project which involves the acquisition and disposition of Plum Creek Timber lands in the Blackfoot River watershed. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is purchasing those lands; being acquired by BLM, USFS, and private landowners. As part of the project, the BLM has acquired approximately 5,480 acres of land in the Marcum Mountain area. On January 24, 2006, the BLM closed the direct purchase of two additional parcels (120 acres) within the Marcum Mountain area, purchased directly from individual land owners. While the area is within the BCP, these acquisitions are not part of the project.

Additional restoration work on Cramer Creek has begun (part of the Linton mine reclamation). Last year's rain event wreaked havoc on some of the stream bank restorations. The contractor has completed the bank reconstruction work. Willows have been collected and cached, to be used in the bank stabilization work this spring.

The EA for the Whitaker Bridge abutment has been completed. The bridge crosses the Blackfoot River upstream from Johnsrud Park. The project will replace an old wooden abutment with concrete. The work is anticipated to take approximately two months and will begin this September. We will probably have the road closed while the work is being done or at least you won't be able to cross the bridge.

QUESTIONS:

Ben Deeble: Which bridge is it you're doing work on? How much BLM land is involved? **Nancy**

Anderson: The Whitaker Bridge. Quite a bit of BLM land is accessible. We have about a 10 mile stretch and Whitaker Bridge is about in the middle of it.

Ben Deeble: So you see it being closed about September/October during the hunting season?

Nancy Anderson: You will be able to access to the bridge and you can come in the other way. It was either that or do it in the summer when the rafters and tubers need access.

Dan Lucas: On the fuels work that was done up at Garnet – did that work out pretty well?

Nancy Anderson: What Dan is talking about is some fuel reduction work we've done around Garnet. The first phase was 20 acres right around town. The problem we had is there are so many cultural resources, that we had to do a test area to see what worked and what didn't. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was concerned about the project work up there. The 20 acres is done and it went really well. It was part of a 300 acre area to be done over the next couple of years. We took DNRC up there to show them what we were doing.

Rick Hotaling – Butte Field Office

The Butte Field Office is working on the Butte Resource Management Plan (RMP). We hope to have a draft out sometime this spring/summer. We basically have all the alternatives put together. We've done all the travel management for the areas we're going to do.

The Legislative EIS we are doing with the National Guard is being reviewed now and we are getting ready for the draft due out about May/June with public meetings to follow. The Legislative EIS is the withdrawal in the Limestone Hills, through the National Guard, for their training range. In that same area, the Guard has requested a qualifying training range for 50 caliber machine guns. The Butte FO is working on that EA now, which will be a new use for the training range. We are trying to address some of the issues dealing with the Limestone Hills mine and trying to avoid impacting the other uses out there. The BLM has asked the Guard to do most of the work on the EA. This was originally proposed for 2010, but the National Guard got money for it this year, so they want to get the money obligated this year.

We just did our 1st phase of acquisition of the Iron Mask Ranch property. The Iron Mask Ranch is about a 6,000 acre ranch that sits just north of Limestone training range and abuts the Forest Service on the west side and the highway to Townsend on the east. The ranch was on the market for several years. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) was interested in helping with the acquisition and originally went in and asked the USFS to acquire it, but the land is outside the USFS boundary, so BLM was asked to do the acquisition. There was a legal dispute, but in July of last year, the owners decided to accept the offer from the RMEF and The Conservation Fund (TCF). A month later, they acquired the property from the owners. Then working with the RMEF and TCF, the BLM will acquire the property. We hope to apply for some grants and then request land and water conservation funding (LWCF) for 2007 to complete the acquisition. The area is great winter game habitat. It is the "crown jewel" of the effort the RMEF has been leading in the Elkhorns.

Richard Young: So, the RMEF bought the land from the landowners and then you are giving money to the RMEF?

Rick Hotaling: Actually it's The Conservation Fund. The RMEF and TCF have an agreement. TCF actually bought the property and the RMEF is securing the note. The BLM then divests them of the property.

Richard Young: So the federal government does eventually wind up putting funds back to manage and purchase the land?

Rick Hotaling: The agreement we had with TCF is that whatever they paid for the property is what the BLM will pay them as long as it does not exceed fair market value. If they paid more than fair market value, we give them fair market value; if they paid less than fair market value, that's what we pay them. Plus there is an administration cost for them.

Dennis Phillippi: Based on other purchases, I would say that is a very reasonable figure for the acquisition.

Rick Hotaling: Yes, our appraisal for that land was at \$500 plus or minus/acre. There are some beautiful sites on that land that we acquired. If the land had been developed, it would have fragmented a huge area of winter elk habitat in the Elkhorns.

Pat Flowers: We worked with RMEF too and we really appreciate the effort you put into making that happen because it is an important piece of ground. Thank You.

Dennis Phillippi: Pat, why didn't the teaming effort work for FWP?

Pat Flowers: Our Habitat Montana program got reauthorized in the last session and we had a commitment to come up with a prioritization process, which is not in hand yet. The timing was wrong.

Sue Marxer: Was it a working ranch?

Rick Hotaling: No. It had not been grazed in 10-15 years.

Sue Marxer: Goes off the tax rolls, right?

Rick Hotaling: Yes; it becomes PILT (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) for Broadwater County. The county commissioners supported us in this acquisition because in Broadwater County, for the basic acreage even as a working ranch, the money we give them in PILT payment exceeds what they would get in property

value tax for that property. If it was subdivided, they would get more money, but they did not want it subdivided. Other acreage will be given to Broadwater County for development. The other thing about the Iron Mask Ranch is that when we complete the withdrawal to the National Guard, which is about 20,000 acres, we will quit making PILT payments on that land because it becomes part of the Department of Defense.

Ben Deeble: There has been all the news about the USFS being asked to dispose of lands to pay for rural schools. Is there any potential for the BLM being in that mix?

Rick Hotaling: Yes, BLM has not developed their list yet. USFS has their list out. It is published and you can look at their web site to see where the parcels are. Through the RMP process, the BLM is currently identifying scattered parcels of lands not accessible to the public.

Pat Flowers: Having prepared similar lists, I would have to say “prepare for the beating”. There is a perception problem. No matter how rational it is, the perception is selling off public land is a bad thing.

Dennis Phillippi: My sources say it is dead on arrival.

Pat Flowers: There was some rumbling for awhile that PILT payments might go away; that they were going to re-structure them?

Rick Hotaling: I haven't heard anything about that.

Tim Bozorth: Part of this selling of land was to offset the Forest Service decrease of payments for rural schools. Is that what you are referring to?

Pat Flowers: I thought it was payments to do with taxes somehow.

Rick Hotaling: A couple more things to mention. Regarding the Golden Sunlight Mine Supplemental EIS: we hope to have the final EIS and Record of Decision out sometime in April.

We did a fuels/forestry project in Clancy, associated with a travel management area, in which we took all the slash from the timber sale, had it chipped and we're now hauling the chips away, to be used as a heat source for a mine in Idaho.

Garry Williams: Has that been cost efficient?

Rick Hotaling: No. It is costing the BLM a lot of money to get rid of the chips.

Rick Hotaling: We got a letter from Jefferson County, concerning roads in the county. It was sent to the Forest Service, BLM, DNRC, and FWP. We are working with the Forest Service on that particular issue. Jefferson County wants to have more involvement in the road issues. The letter states they are taking ownership of all roads and paths in Jefferson County, to assert an RS2477 ROW on every road/path. We met with the county commissioners and that is not what they want to do. But they want to work more closely with the federal agencies on road issues.

Richard Young: You mean you have some of the roads closed?

Rick Hotaling: The County felt that when we close roads, it causes an impact on the county. They felt that only the county has the right to close roads.

Richard Young: Do they then have to maintain the roads?

Rick Hotaling: That is the question we posed to them. The BLM basically worked through the issue with them, as far as what they are asking for. The issue is that they want more involvement with the Federal Government with travel planning. Going to court over RS2477 is not their intention.

Dennis Phillippi: Back to Limestone Hills – did you anticipate the EIS in the planning process originally?

Rick Hotaling: For the RMP? Yes – it started before the RMP. The original thought was that the withdrawal would be completed before the RMP came out. We've had to change that position

Dennis Phillippi: So, it slowed you down some?

Rick Hotaling: It did a little. Plus we are working on two major EIS's which have a lot of planning involved, so it gets to be a resource staffing issue.

Dennis Phillippi: What about that fuels project just North of Whitehall? How's that going? The Whitetail Basin Demo Project?

Rick Hotaling: We did burn part of it this fall, but did not complete the burn because the objective is to kill all the trees out there. They didn't feel they could meet the objective with fire this fall, so that is to be completed this spring in those test parcels. Whatever the fire doesn't get, the BLM will have to cut down.

Tim Bozorth – Dillon Field Office

Dillon RMP: Protest letter responses were sent from the Washington Office on 2/6/06. The Dillon RMP Record of Decision (ROD) was signed on 2/7/06. The Final RMP will be mailed from the printer on or about 3/3/06. The Notice of Availability will be in the Federal Register on 3/10/06. [NOTE: NOA was not published on 3/10/06.] The protest resolution took 8 months.

Sue Marxer: Referring to the protest period: How did that change the plan?

Tim Bozorth: We made no changes based on the protests we received. It is a long, drawn out process that takes a long time to get anything accomplished.

Pat Flowers: What is the next step for those who want to protest - District Court?

Tim Bozorth: Yes, it would have to be litigated and we don't expect that to happen.

Tim Bozorth:

The Dillon Field Office is working on the Sage Creek Watershed Assessment Environmental Assessment. Last year they looked at 22 allotments in the Sage Creek Watershed; 110,000 acres. They will continue to work on that this winter, and hope to get it finished this spring.

The Dillon Field Office (DFO) recently lost two key positions. Renee Johnson, RMP team lead, moved to a position here in Butte as the Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources and Mark Goeden, the Assistant Field Manager in Dillon for Renewable Resources, transferred to the Forest Service in Bismarck, ND. Pat Fosse has been moved into Mark's position. She will be the new Assistant Field Manager for renewables for the Dillon Field Office. The field office did get approval to fill a Rangeland Management Specialist vacancy we've had for nearly a year. We are unable to fill behind Renee or Pat.

The Dillon Field Office is gearing up for Watershed Assessments this year, about 40 allotments on 95,000 acres on the Blacktail and South Tobacco Root watersheds this summer.

Montana Mining has filed a Plan of Operations for processing vermiculite mine tailings at the Elk Gulch Vermiculite Mine in the Sweetwater Mountains, east of Dillon. A proposal to mine this site in the late 1990's coincided with Libby and caused quite a stir. The DFO worked with EPA and DEQ; DEQ took 57 samples and analyzed them for asbestos this fall. Only trace amounts were detected; less than 1% and 1% asbestos is the standard. So the field office is proceeding with this proposal. They are now doing NEPA work on it. There has been a lot of controversy in the local community on this. They had planned to do some of the processing in town, but won't do that now. It will all be bagged or covered when moved.

Sue Marxer: How would they take it out?

Tim Bozorth: They would go down Carter Road, run it around and come out on the Highway where the new vet is, then out to the interstate.

Sue Marxer: That is a mess up there, that mine. Have you seen that mine? Is there a different operator at the mine now?

Tim Bozorth: They are in the process of doing some expansion. That is all on private land.

The Ermont abandoned mine site clean-up is scheduled to take place this summer west of Dillon. This is about a \$1 million project to clean up mine tailings and hazardous mine openings. The field office is in the final stages of the design work and the contract will be let this spring. Construction will take place this summer to avoid sage grouse concerns.

The Dillon Field Office is working to fix up cabins in the Gravelly Mountains and at the Nye Ranch property on the Beaverhead, to enter into a rental program.

The Dillon office is finishing tree marking in the Centennial Mountains. This sale and prescribed fire are part of the Centennial Watershed Assessment forest health treatments; to take care of the dead and dying trees, to reduce some of the hazardous fuel build-up. There are slightly over 2 million board feet in this sale that will be out for bid this spring. The BLM has been working with American Wildlands, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and Montana Wilderness Association to design those. BLM staff will have a meeting tomorrow with those folks and some other folks from Sun Mountain to look at how to do the final design on another portion of that whole picture in the Bean Creek Drainage. There is a sale proposed there. The main issues will be around the road, and the fact that Bean Creek is 100% pure west slope cutthroat trout habitat.

Questions:

Jack Kirkley: What part of the Centennial Valley?

Tim Bozorth: It is west of Lakeview; east of Price Creek. It was not part of the Winslow fire and it is outside the Wilderness Study Area. It is mostly Douglas-fir.

Dennis Phillippi: Who will become your new range staff person?

Tim Bozorth: We are not replacing Pat's position. That is the position we will be losing – the supervisory range person.

Sue Marxer: Will she still be doing that in her new capacity?

Tim Bozorth: Basically, yes.

Dennis Phillippi: When is the effective date?

Tim Bozorth: The effective date for that was Monday and Renee came up here the 6th of January

Dennis Phillippi: The final version of the grazing guides – are they done at the national office?

Tim Bozorth: I've not heard that they are putting them out yet.

Dennis Phillippi: The question was - will the RACs get a chance to see them again.

Tim Bozorth: No. You won't see them again and neither will we.

Montana Challenge:

Pat Flowers: Montana Challenge was an effort that came out of our recognition in Fish Wildlife and Parks, that the world is changing and Montana is changing dramatically. And with that our business and constituency is changing. We wanted a comprehensive picture of the demographic changes and economic changes, in order to be prepared to deliver future goods. We needed better information to deliver to counties. This concept came out of that and with discussions with the Forest Service. This has been well received by economic interests and by non-government organizations/groups.

Rob Brooks coordinates our responsive management unit, collecting survey information for us. The majority of our funding in FWP comes from license sales, so if we're not keeping close tabs on the pulse

of our constituents, we can find ourselves in trouble as far as funding. Bob's job is to make sure we're keeping our finger on that pulse.

Rob Brooks: This project started about 4 years ago. The Forest Service came to FWP with demographic information and asked FWP what could be done with the information.

Rob Brooks presented a power point presentation on The Montana Challenge – “Where the West meets the West”. He discussed demographics of Montana and how they are changing throughout the state. He divided Montana into three regions. They differ biophysically, economically, and demographically. There has been an out migration from eastern Montana and growth in central and western Montana. Rob showed a variety of graphs and statistics, depicting demographic changes in the state. The demographic and economic changes in Montana reflect national trends. There has been mass domestic migration to the Rocky Mountains, so much so that the Rocky Mountain Front is being referred to as the Third Coast. **The Montana Challenge** is to remain the last best place for fish and wildlife in a changing west. For more information on The Montana Challenge, visit their web site at <http://fwp.mt.gov/tmc>.

The Goals of the project:

- To document and understand Montana's changing socio and economic conditions
- Analyze how those changes affect fish and wildlife and the human uses that occur around those resources.
- Discuss with Montanans the implications for natural resource management and economic development.

The project is now in its third phase – a discussion with Montanans. One thing that has come out of this study is that public access is critical. If people can't utilize our resources, they are not going to value them. If there is one message FWP would like to get across from the Montana Challenge, it is that healthy ecosystems with healthy fish and wildlife populations, with good public access to those resources, provides for a unique quality of life in Montana and helps generate some economic prosperity for the state. Addressing these challenges will take a lot of effort by community leaders, business leaders and agency folks working with their publics. The question is: What do you want to see Montana look like 20-30 years from now?

The Montana Challenge Asks Us

- How do we maintain healthy productive landscapes on public and private lands?
- How do we insure the health and abundance of our fish and wildlife
- How can we maintain public access to these resources?

Questions:

Dennis Phillippi: Do you have a philosophy or process for bridging the gap between the two philosophies (between traditional and emerging economic interests)?

Rob Brooks: No. We're working with a professor at the University of Montana. He presents information at the outlook seminars and we have asked him to draft a chapter related to the wood products industry, talking about the forest industry in terms of the quality of life for Montanans. A lot of people move to Montana for the scenic view.

Dennis Phillippi: That's one piece of the puzzle, certainly when you figure Montana is two thirds private land/private ownership. You think of public access issues and I see some work needs to be done.

Rob Brooks: Absolutely. The other two things I will mention: we're going to be working with Montana State University, in terms of developing the agriculture information provided here, because as you pointed out, private lands are a huge part of our land base and they are critical in terms of our wildlife resources. We'll also be developing a chapter on access and hopefully open up more discussion about that and

provide information about what access was 50-100 years ago, where it has evolved to today, and how we might move forward with it.

Pat Flowers: I think part of that bridge will never occur because part of it comes out of the philosophical difference among economists on how you assess economic conditions and project economic changes.

Dennis Phillippi: You need to add more people to the formula; that's where common ground will be.

Pat Flowers: That's my opinion. That camp will remain there. It's a healthy debate.

Rob Brooks: What we would hope for is a healthy discussion. We just don't want to get into a controversial debate.

Ben Deeble: I noticed on one of the slides that net farm income has declined by 44 % from 1990-2000. Is that a real number or an artifact of accounting or what?

Dave Schulz: Maybe in the last 2 years there may be a transition because of livestock prices being somewhat better. But when you compare the receipts from for example a cow or cow/calf sales and you offset that with the cost of living, all in all, agriculture is in a decline. And yet I tell myself one of the best things that can help is to keep looking and assessing and making good decisions.

Sue Marxer: Something else that was apparent in the slides. In eastern Montana, ranchers are getting older. Ranches are being sold off; estate tax is a big issue.

Rob McCulloch: The other part is that land is too expensive to farm. You used to be able to make a living and pay for the land by farming. Land is being sold now for development/subdivisions. Montanans cannot afford the land. The ranchers can't compete.

Sue Marxer: A lot of people would like to enlarge their farm size but can't afford it.

Rob McCulloch: We see the same push because I have processed some conservation easements. The theory behind conservation easements is to leave that land in agriculture, but what I am really seeing is they pre-subdivide the land, then get a conservation easement to cut down on the taxes, then sell off the land in residential housing.

Pat Flowers: I don't completely agree – there are some valuable conservation easements.

Rob McCulloch: Examples of Ruby Valley and Twin Bridges are some of the worst.

Pat Flowers: But there are some large conservation easements that are meeting some of this need where they are keeping working ranches, retaining it as good wildlife habitat, and providing public access.

Sue Marxer: Sometimes even the conservation easements are political.

Ben Deeble: Is BLM analyzing this internally, this kind of trend and what it means for the agency? Is the BLM looking at the fact that we appear to have farmer/ranch income collapsing as well as shifts in land use? Are you analyzing that and including it in the planning?

Tim Bozorth: There was recognition of that in the Dillon RMP. Our recreation use is dispersed, and we know it is increasing, but we don't have a way to quantify it.

Sue Marxer: We have been in an extreme drought and cut backs on BLM lands are what - 40%? We can't increase the herd because of the effects of the drought.

Tim Bozorth: They were up to 40% last year – that was the highest.

Rick Hotaling: To answer your question Ben, yes. On a national basis, the BLM looks at demographics. We know that the population in the west is growing rapidly. The amount of population living within 25 miles of BLM lands has grown exponentially from the 60's and 70's to now, and we continue to see it grow. There is more demand on public lands. We have both traditional uses and emerging uses and that demand is growing and needed. It is a challenge to balance use and maintain a sustainable resource.

Rob McCulloch: Which probably explains why RACs exist now. Will it change our docket as far as what questions we're asked and asked to respond to?

Rick Hotaling: I definitely think so. Travel management is a large part of the RMP and that deals with managing people; where they can go, and what they can do when they get there.

Jack Kirkley: I'll start with your points on watchable wildlife. I think there's been a shift in the FWP agency as well as the thought going into the importance of the private lands. If I want to show people

watchable wildlife, I will go by the Matador Ranch on the portions that aren't hunted because that is where you see big game this time of year. And yet the disconnect I think, for folks is that they don't realize how critical those wild lands are up above the private lands the rest of the year. Granted you won't see as much wildlife while driving BLM and Forest Service Roads. But when there was a slide show about Montana's wild lands (Rick Graetz), Governor Schweitzer was there to give the opening remarks and people knowing that he was showing up had the first picket I've seen since the logging trucks rolled up and the wilderness debate was occurring even before '85. Here's the governor giving his blessings to wildlands. It was just a slide show. There is a disconnect there that somehow giving tribute to wild lands means closing down access to OHV's or they will get locked out of their hunting or fishing areas because of Wilderness with a big "W". I think there is sort of a tunnel vision in our public in Montana that it is an either/or situation. That it is this conflict between private lands and public lands. I would sure like to look at ways to explore diminishing the heat that's generated when you talk about wild lands and wilderness or is it wildlife or is it agriculture when it really has to be a blend of those. It has changed a lot – it has gotten better. But it still has a long way to go. We need to find that middle ground and realize that wild lands are important for wildlife and water quality and there is nothing scary about having those. There are places where there is no access, and that is where you are going to see the animals. And I don't see any of the agencies saying lets have a few places where we aren't going to gun everything. Look at how many people just want to go see wildlife. And I am a hunter.

Pat Flowers: Drive up the Madison; drive up the Ruby. I don't think that is an issue because there is so much closed land. The challenge is not to have it go further than it already has. Because it is astounding how much viewable wildlife there is from the road! I see the opposite being more of a problem.

Dan Lucas: One of the things we deal with regularly is education. So one of the other demographics I would like to see added to the presentation is to go back 70 or 80 years; look at the percentage of population that is directly dependant for their livelihood on agriculture and natural resources. And then transpose that to the number of people who really have direct knowledge of what resource management is. And that's where we get into the philosophical things, not only with the economists, but there is a philosophical difference of opinion on what it means to manage resources. We dealt with that on a local level when we were doing watershed assessment for Rock Creek. 89% of the Rock Creek watershed lies in Granite County; 11% in Missoula County. Unfortunately, Missoula County drives the management on that watershed and 86% of our private sector economy is directly related to agriculture and natural resources; less than 2% Missoula County. They really don't have a close connection to the land, and yet they drive the management. Education is the only way we will bridge the philosophical gap.

Rob Brooks: Good point. We chose 1970 because in the late 60's and early 70's, there was some major not only national legislation, but some local legislation. That's when Montana's constitution was rewritten. NEPA, clean water, clean air – all these national acts were implemented. So we went back that far to see if that changed the way things were viewed. But you make a good point – we may want to go back farther, for the ag, possibly wood products and some of the other basic industries that have put Montana where it's at.

Dan Lucas: For example, I had a discussion with some folks on lower Rock Creek, and their statement was I want this view out my window, up this portion of the stream, to never change. I want my grandchildren to look at the exact same view. I tried to explain to them resources are dynamic. No matter what we do, this is not going to look the same when your grandchildren come. You can either choose to have some influence on what it's going to look like or you can back off and see what you're going to get.

Dennis Phillippi: Regarding the agenda item about how would the RAC like to be involved in Field Office projects – is there any way RAC could work with rural development groups, on things like you just presented? There are certainly some missing parts in rural development.

Richard Young: I read that, particularly back east, hunting is decreasing in this country. Is that true?

Pat Flowers: I just saw two articles in the last few months in the NY Times talking about the greening of hunting. And they were basically saying: get out there and hunt – it is a green thing to do. Maybe that will turn around.

Rob Brooks: Over the past 10-15 years, hunting nationally has been slowly declining. The last couple of years, statistics have shown that, possibly because of the greening and maybe it's a little more socially acceptable, it's been increasing. Be careful though – it depends on which statistics you look at.

Rob McCulloch: I think it is important that the agencies that manage those lands look at habitat enhancement of border properties, to pull the burden off the ranchers, by creating places the game want to go and then to work with ranchers to urge them to go back to it. What are we doing wrong in management that game animals have no desire to be in remote areas?

Pat Flowers: That question is easily answered - access. If you have people hunting those grounds, the animals won't be hunkered down on those grounds. But you've got to put pressure on animals in those areas. The Madison is a perfect example of that.

Sue Marxer: There is a second component to that. We've got the feed and the water.

Pat Flowers: True, but there is feed and water up higher.

Rob Brooks: I'll use eastern Montana as an example. Because of the Habitat Ranch Consolidation, people are coming in with a different view of whether or not they want to allow hunting. We have a tremendous controversy going in eastern Montana. The ranchers who have been there for 40/50/100 years are saying we allow people to hunt on our property. With a new rancher, who may only live on a place periodically and doesn't allow hunting – the animals aren't going to leave. The animals aren't stupid. They learn quickly that if they jump the fence, they are basically in a refuge. Discussions are needed in the communities, with the ranchers.

Sue Marxer: That's where the balance comes in. We used to allow a lot of hunting, but then all of a sudden you've got all this access, you're overwhelmed; you lose control. There's got to be a balance.

Rob Brooks: It can't be just a discussion amongst the agencies and the ranchers. The community needs to come together and say, can we as a community work something out that will benefit all of us? Agencies can not solve this issue on their own. We need to involve the community. That's what the Montana Challenge is all about. We need to get out there in the community and develop some political, business community solutions for these issues.

Nominations for election of officers:

Marilyn Krause: Opened nominations from the floor for the election of officers.

For the Chair person, nominations were: Dan Lucas, Rob Cunningham, and Dave Schulz

The group asked Marilyn to clarify a few things:

Marilyn Krause: Officers are elected the 1st meeting of the calendar year.

Chair responsibilities:

- helps develop the agenda/approves the minutes
- serves as a contact person for the national, state and local RAC coordinators
- works with the BLM to set up subgroups
- sometimes facilitates meetings
- attends national conferences
- time spent depends on issues at the time

Selection for Chair: Dan Lucas

Nominations for Vice Chair were: Dennis Phillippi, Rob Cunningham and Dave Schulz

Selection for Vice Chair: Rob Cunningham

AFTERNOON SESSION:

Marilyn Krause: Does the RAC still want the “Standards and Guidelines Implementation” handout? This is for the Dillon Field Office. We should have Butte's and Missoula's by the time we send out the minutes from this meeting.

Ben Deeble: I think this is very useful. Tim, just browsing through this, it seems like there are more instances of not meeting Standards & Guides than in previous reports. Am I interpreting that right?

Tim Bozorth: This is a combination of everything to date, so it covers about the last five years. It was done, starting in 1998 and going through last year. Pat got the last stuff in there, so you can see under the year assessed, where we are. Some things we're not meeting the standards on; others we are. We may look at a riparian area and say here we are not meeting the standards, so the allotment isn't, because we need to make some changes. But other areas we may not need to do anything in certain pastures. The Washington office spoke to the difficulty in trying to assess standards and then amalgamate things so you have an accurate picture of how much of the land you're not meeting standards on vs. how much you are. Each state is looking at things a bit differently as far as if they count acres or miles. I'm not alarmed at what I'm seeing. There are places we know we need to make changes and are going to make changes based on the assessments and where we don't have AMP's or we have something that is not working, that's where we're not meeting standards. I am still startled that in 2006 we still have allotments out there without grazing strategies on them. I think the process is valuable.

Ben Deeble: There have been decisions sent directly to our homes and I want to commend you on what looks like some good decisions and some tough decisions in the past 3-4 months.

Marilyn Krause: So what I hear you saying is that at least for some of you this is valuable?

Tim Bozorth: This at least gives you an opportunity to know more about what we're doing and an opportunity to ask for more information.

Jack Kirkley: And when we see something that says current management continues, we would assume that it was prefaced with something like no concerns noted or that no red flags came up.

Rob McCulloch: How do your technical people feel about this? Have they found it more measurable; is it a useful tool for them?

Tim Bozorth: The watershed assessment process and assessing standards? Yes. We go out as an ID team and we look at biodiversity issues as a group and after walking areas, we discuss what we think as a group. As a whole, it is good for the specialists to hear different points of views and then they can formulate their recommendations.

Jack Kirkley: What is this about air quality?

Tim Bozorth: I was the primary instigator in putting the air quality in there. I was trying to get across a message that these don't just apply to grazing. They apply to all uses of the public land and all uses need to comply with the standards. It may be somewhat limited in its usefulness, but the intent was to keep that thought process going for the RAC's.

Recreation Resource Advisory Councils Update:

Brad Rixford gave a presentation regarding Recreation Resource Advisory Councils (RRACs). He gave out two handouts:

- (1) the DRAFT interagency agreement and,
- (2) a copy of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA)

Brad discussed the fee authority history:

- Agencies have had broad authority to collect recreation fees for over 40 years under the LWCF Act of 1965 and more recently through the Fee Demo Program, which was established in 1996.
- REA is different from LWCF in that it ensures fees are reinvested back to collection sites and units.
- REA differs from the Fee Demo program in that it limits where fees can be charged based on the amount and types of facilities and services provided.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) was passed in December 2004. The Act:

- Grants recreation fee authority to 5 federal agencies for 10 years.
- Requires BLM to re-invest a minimum of 80% of its collections back to the fee source.

- Directs BLM and the USFS to establish Recreation Resource Advisory Committees. FS has agreed to use BLM RACs where already established in the western states.
- BLM is responsible for (1) public participation efforts and notices prior to establishing fee changes, (2) assessing new fees and establishing criteria, (3) informing the public about how fees are being spent, (4) seeking advice from RRACs, and (5) submitting annual reports back to Congress.
- Fee revenues available at each site may be used for maintenance and repairs, facility improvements that enhance visitor enjoyment, visitor access, health and safety needs, visitor information, habitat restoration, law enforcement and direct fee program costs.
- Overhead management costs can not exceed 15% of total collections.

Current Status of Act Implementation:

- BLM and USFS have drafted an Interagency Agreement for the establishment and functions of the Recreation Resource Advisory Sub-committee under existing RACs. Comment period ended 2/17. The final draft is to be completed by 3/15. It will then be presented to Congress for approval in June and a Federal Register Notice released shortly thereafter.

Primary responsibilities and make-up of the Recreation Resource Advisory Councils (RRACs):

- Provide advice on fee proposals and make documented recommendations.
- Made up of 7-13 members (Act says 11).
- Members shall represent the following interests: motorized and non-motorized recreation, hunting and fishing, motorized and non-motorized outfitter and guides, local environmental groups, state and local governments, Indian tribes and a tourism representative or a balanced representation agreed to by the Advisory Council.
- A USFS representative will also be a member when USFS fee proposals are being analyzed.
- Multiple advisory councils may use the same subcommittee.
- Must meet at least once per year or more often if needed.
- Meetings must be open to the public and records kept.
- Members must be willing to consider both BLM and USFS proposals.
- Secretary shall appoint members from a list of nominations made by the Governor and a designated county official.
- Staggered terms of two to three years.
- Chairperson selected by the subcommittee.
- Eight members shall constitute a forum.
- Recommendations may be submitted to agency heads if approved by a majority of the members.

Summary of Butte Field Office Recreation Fees:

- Currently manage 6 fee sites (Expanded Amenity Sites)
- Fees collected for camping, day use of highly developed facilities, group reservations, and day-use seasonal pass.
- Issue between 15 and 20 Special Recreation Use Permits.
- Total collections last year were about \$140,000.
- Pending needs include new fee site at White Sandy and possibly Holter Dam.
- Later proposals expected for East Bank, French Bar and outfitters using our boat ramp areas for commercial purposes.

Richard Young: I'm confused. This is supposed to look at both the Forest Service and the BLM, right? Some of the forests have RACs. Is that right?

Marilyn Krause: Except FS RACs are for a different purpose. They're formed at the request of the counties and they deal with funding – money for particular projects.

Dave Schulz: Yes, I am on the forest RAC. Back to the earlier discussion: the “Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act” of 2000, better known as public law 106393. The county can

dedicate certain dollars; these are those forest reserve dollars we talked about earlier; and Madison County puts 20% of our total allocation into this. The RAC in the Forest Service is simply a grants review team made up similarly to this group in background and diversity but only to assess projects and grant those dollars for different projects that relate to the forest. So we don't have authority or direction or position to make recommendations to the agency on management.

Richard Young: So the RRAC - what are the options? That this group would become the RRAC or if it was accepted by the Forest Service and their representative showed up here or is it setting up a whole separate RRAC?

Marilyn Krause: I think where RACs are established, like this group, it would become a subgroup of this particular council.

Dennis Phillippi: Who do they report to?

Brad Rixford: They would make their recommendations straight to our State Director.

Dennis Phillippi: Which is a deviation from the way our subgroups are functioning under this charter.

Tim Bozorth: This needs to be clarified in the agreement. If it's a subgroup of this group, it should come to this group, for you to forward or have some say in that recommendation - if it's according to our current charter for this group. So there are some things that need to be worked out.

Tim Bozorth: One question for Brad: I agree with you in general on your assessment of the workload except where in regards to SRP's - that's a whole new ball game. Every time we review or renew an SRP, it needs to come to this RRAC?

Brad Rixford: It says implementation of non-commercial, individual special recreation permits. So, most of our permits that we issue tend to be commercial. They are still trying to decide whether or not the RRAC would deliberate over a modification of existing fees. That may or may not be something the subgroup would even look at. It might be just new fees only. We are just about to finish a site this year on Hauser Lake called White Sandy that we're spending about 1.5 million dollars on and we may not even have a fee by Memorial Day 2007. We had anticipated one when we wrote the Environmental Assessment. So the public has been alerted through the NEPA process. Now, according to this we can't do a thing until we get approval or concurrence.

Rob McCulloch: Do you have the ability to set the fees independent per site?

Brad Rixford: The way we've been structuring our fees has been a bit specific in the sense that where we have lakes and people come for longer stays, we have to provide more amenities and more services, so we tend to charge a higher fee at our lake sites. We do have the freedom now to charge different fees.

Tim Bozorth: And we've all been through a review process on those fees already to see that they are appropriate. We did that 6 months to a year ago.

Rob McCulloch: I was just looking at this last thing that came out that the federal government had across the board established one reservation system, that added \$9 to every reservation made out there.

Tim Bozorth: Yes, that is the Forest Service automated system for cabin reservations.

Rob McCulloch: Are you guys into that one too?

Brad Rixford: There's only one site that has that. Oregon has one big campground where they have a reservation system.

Richard Young: Your cabins are not going to be on a reservation system then?

Tim Bozorth: I'm hoping not. At this point they're not. We tried to get the one tied into the Forest Service system, but now we are just doing it out of our office.

Dennis Phillippi's Summation of the Whitehouse Conservation Conference:

In August, I attended the 3rd ever Whitehouse Conservation Conference. The first conference was held in 1906 or 1907; the other one was held when Teddy Roosevelt was president. This was a 3-day conference. To give some background: during the last 20 years, I have served as a facilitator and mediator as a conflict resolution person for some 300 different groups across the country. So that was the basis for being asked to attend - it was by invitation.

Back in April last year we were contacted to submit nominations for this conference, for actual presenters, which resulted in this book called Success Stories across the United States. I nominated 16 success

stories. They didn't have to be government stories; could be private, or non-government, anywhere there were good success stories about people working together to solve issues. So I nominated 16, and 3 of them were selected. One is in this region - the Blackfoot Challenge. It was highlighted pretty much at the conference. The other two were the Malpai Borderlands area of Arizona/New Mexico - it's mostly all grazing related things. That group did an excellent job of moving from a degraded watershed and landscape to a success story. The other one was an eastern Nevada landscape coalition, which was out of Ely, Nevada. Those were all discussed to some degree at the conference.

It was a 3 day conference with 1200 people invited. One and a half days was spent by the participants celebrating success stories and attending sessions. I took in the Blackfoot Challenge one, because I think it is a real model for Montana. Those folks have done an excellent job of bringing some controversial issues to where they have a partnership. The other day was spent in break out sessions and groups, to share experiences. All comments were recorded and there are proceedings out for that. They should be on a web page (Dennis will give the web site address to Marilyn). Secretary Norton was at the break out group and she had some excellent points to make on this whole arena of cooperative conservation. She and her staff are very committed to these partnerships and cooperative approaches to dealing with conflict. There is another opportunity to visit with her and her staff next March, to further the discussion on cooperative conservation.

I felt it was very successful. It put more of a focus on this initiative of partnering around conflict. The budget shows there will be money available toward the quality of conservation. So we were all encouraged to come back with suggestions on where there is a need or a group that is ready to start doing things. Maybe the Montana Challenge could fit into something on a cooperative scale, either on a local level as a trial basis like Dave was suggesting or Montana itself.

Just about any environmental or natural resource topic you could think of was covered at the conference - the whole gamut was covered. Attending was very worthwhile.

Marilyn Krause: who else from Montana attended?

Dennis Phillippi: People from Blackfoot. It seems like there is money in the pot for cooperative conservation. The chair of this cooperative conservation push is the CEQ director - James Cunningham. He sent out a 4-page email showing four categories where we could get involved at the local level - agencies and folks that are in this partnering thing.

Marilyn Krause: So how would groups get involved?

Dennis Phillippi: I will give you the web address when I get back. But back to the RAC - I see things from a community and a resource basis that could fit into that perfectly well. We just need to get more information to everyone here to see where we fit into this. It seems this would be perfect for RACs and local groups working together for conservation means.

Marilyn Krause: introduced the discussion topic: "How would the RAC like to be involved in Field Office projects.

Nancy Anderson: My question is more administrative. I think all three offices might be giving you information in different ways. What we started doing is for our major EA's, we include the RAC members. We give them a copy, just to provide Missoula Field Office information to the RAC members. The last time we sent something out, I started thinking about it and wondered if that is the way the RAC wants to receive things? We can do it electronically. It is really up to you as to how you want to receive information.

Marilyn Krause: Some of the new members may not yet be on the mailing list. But for those of you who are, do you feel you are getting too much information?

Dennis Phillippi: I think it's helpful because even though all of it might not be of interest to all of us, some of it is and those that see an interest can use it.

Robin Cunningham: Better to get the spectrum and make your pick.

Marilyn Krause: I think Butte does something similar to Missoula. We don't send every EA for every fenceline change, etc.

Rick Hotaling: It's basically the larger ones, the ones that potentially have more issues; not the simple ones.

Tim Bozorth: We do the same.

Rob McCulloch: The stuff I get from the Forest Service is categorized by area of interest, be it minerals, recreation or whatever. It talks about where it is in the process, usually what the location is and I find those fairly handy because I can go through and figure out who I need to call to get additional information. But it's just a one liner and I find that very helpful.

Ben Deeble: Should we receive all information electronically rather than hard copy? Or are there some things that are simply too difficult to push out of the office in anything but hard copy?

Marilyn Krause: Some files could be large if they include a map.

Nancy Anderson: Maps would be the hard thing, but we have most of our EA's electronically.

Pat Flowers: A lot of what we get from all three of your offices is notification of availability and those you could send us electronically.

Marilyn Krause: So, if it's reasonable to send electronically, does that work for folks?

Dennis Phillippi: Just notify us where to get it.

Marilyn Krause: And the level of the projects you've been sent – is that OK? It sounds like this was more of a verification of process. Except that we'll start doing more things electronically.

Rick Hotaling: So we should send our scoping letters electronically. Then if you would like to have a full copy, of a final EA or decision documents, we can either send it to you electronically or if it is too large to push through the email system, we can send it hard copy. MT/Dakotas is instituting our internet site (<http://mt.blm.gov>) and there is a place on there that talks about our projects that we submit. You can look at those projects and compare those against the stuff you are getting notified of to see if we are sharing too much information or not enough. We are supposed to be using the web site if it stays up.

Rob McCulloch: Is the claim recordation back up yet?

Rick Hotaling: I don't think so. The only thing that is up is the basic information – recreation, etc.

Rob McCulloch: I would say I have a request for the State Office number at least once every other day, and who in the office to address for claims, etc.

Marilyn Krause: In your minutes you'll see the schedule for the rest of the year:

Future RAC Meeting Dates/Locations:

- May 11, 2006 – Missoula
- September 6-7, 2006 – Dillon
- November 29, 2006 – Butte

Future Topics to be discussed at the Missoula May 11th meeting:

- Recreation RAC Update
- RMP Briefing (Tentative)
- Trial Project /Co-op weed project. Wash vehicles prior to hunting season/Dillon area (Tim)
- Grazing Guidelines?

Discussion over these topics were as follows:

Pat Flowers: Rick, do you think a draft Butte Resource Management Plan will be out by then?

Rick Hotaling: Maybe. I still need to get the Washington Office to approve the draft we're sending out. We should be close to having it in final format for the printer, so we could give you a briefing of what the draft RMP is going to look like. You may not actually have a hard copy to see for another month or so, but we should be really close.

Dennis Phillippi: I can't make May 11th, but will get information to RAC. Last year we had talked about a trial project out of Dillon that has to do with car washing for hunters and off-road vehicles for invasive species. I think it is worthwhile to pursue getting that in motion on a trial basis somewhere. I

think the RAC committee could support being involved in that. We should see about getting that on the ground by hunting season of this year.

Tim Bozorth: We've talked about trying to do something with the Beaverhead County weed supervisor. Right now we provide some funding to the local car wash. I will follow up on that some more.

Dave Schulz: Headwaters RC&D has sponsored a similar project in the last 4-6 years. Many of the car washes in Butte have supported it the first few days or weekends of hunting season. We've done it out in Beaverhead County and, for example, the carwashes in Madison County have done it. The drawback is that the carwashes want to help, but they would appreciate some reimbursement. We've used youth groups to help disseminate weed related material. The point I'm getting at is these things have occurred. I don't know how aggressively they are happening today. I do believe everybody here would recognize the importance of cleaning vehicles off before they do go into our public lands.

Dennis Phillippi: Public and private. I know a lot of private land owners won't let you on unless you've had your car washed.

Rob McCulloch: There was the comment Sue made. That a lot of the Matador was open until this last year and they found there was so much weed control incurred by letting them drive on their property that they shut the gate and made it walk-in only because they can't afford to take care of the weeds.

Tim Bozorth: One of the things we were thinking was some sort of sticker you'd get when you do that and then see if we could get some landowners who would provide increased access because of that.

Ben Deeble: How has it worked at the car washes? Do people get a free car wash?

Dave Schulz: Generally speaking, that's the emphasis or motivation. At the same time you've got a group of young kids washing your car off and often people will donate money anyway. Another thing that has come up is to take it a step further, to take it to an under body car wash. We looked at a project to raise funds to build one. It was \$15-16,000, so the interest of building 6 or 7 of them wasn't that great.

Tim Bozorth: At least. I know they had one in Worland. The BLM office there put one in and they had a lot of problems with it. The under body wash at Mini is about a half price deal. We offset that so that it is \$3. We will explore some options and see what we can come back with and let you know where we are in May.

Marilyn Krause: Any other topics for the May meeting?

Ben Deeble: Do we think there might be the new grazing guidelines out by then?

Tim Bozorth: Maybe – you'll hear when we do.

Dave Schulz: Remind me again when the council application closes?

Marilyn Krause: March 27th. So, if you know of people who might be interested, let them know.

Richard Young: Do you have to reapply?

Marilyn Krause: Yes – you do have to reapply. Dick, you won't have to, but for folks who submitted an application 2-3 years ago, they would need to submit a new application.

Marilyn Krause thanked Pat Flowers, for setting up the Montana Challenge Presentation and the meeting was adjourned.

Approved by:

/s/ Dan Lucas
Dan Lucas, Chairperson

Western Montana Resource Advisory Council
September 7, 2006
Minutes

RAC Members Present: Robin Cunningham, Donna Tate McDonald, Rob McCulloch, Ben Deeble, Mitzi Rossillon, Joyce Thompson, Francis Auld, David Schulz, Richard Young, Pat Flowers, Jack Kirkley

RAC Members Absent: Dan Lucas, Sue Marxer, Dennis Phillippi, Garry Williams

BLM Staff; Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Manager; Rick Hotaling, Butte Field Manager; Tim Bozorth, Dillon Field Manager; Marilyn Krause, and Brad Rixford, Butte Field Office

Guests: Barbara Bauerle, Dillon Tribune and Ty Cobb

Welcome

Marilyn Krause welcomed RAC members to Dillon, and everyone in attendance introduced themselves. Special thanks were given to Tim Bozorth and Pat Fosse for the excellent field tour the previous day. Tim Bozorth expressed his appreciation for the advice offered by the council for managing public lands.

Tim Bozorth awarded plaques to outgoing RAC members Donna Tate McDonald and Rob McCulloch in recognition of their service on the council. Sue Marxer, who was not able attend the meeting, is also an outgoing RAC member and her plaque will be awarded in person by Tim Bozorth.

Field Office Overviews

Nancy Anderson – Missoula Field Office:

Personnel: Range Management Specialist, Mike Tietmeyer, accepted a position with BLM in Pinedale, WY, and his reporting date was August 14. Several Rangeland Management Specialists in the MT/Dakotas are completing 1 month details to assist the Missoula Field Office in Mike's absence.

Work continues on the Hoodoos Watershed, which covers approximately 53,000 acres. A scoping letter was sent out in December and two public meetings were held in January. The Field Office should have the EA completed this month and sent out to the public for comment.

Last May, a press release was issued to interested parties regarding a proposal to harvest beetle-killed timber in the Garnet Range. The Interdisciplinary Team is working on the project and hopefully an EA will be sent out for review in October.

We are also working on Phase II of the Garnet Stewardship project. Our main focus is to reduce hazardous fuels in the vicinity of Garnet Ghost Town. The project covers 300 acres and is very labor intensive due to the large amount of historical artifacts throughout the project area.

The Hayes Stewardship project will be awarded this month, and will treat approximately 80 acres along the Lower Blackfoot River near Belmont Creek.

QUESTIONS:

Richard Young: Do you have difficulty getting bids for the projects?

Nancy Anderson: We have some problems with getting contractors involved and educated on BLM needs. Some of the money earned from timber sales can go toward the projects.

Rob McCulloch: Often small parcels/acreages are not worth the contractors' trouble and it can be hard to get bids on many of the smaller projects.

The Flint/Rock Timber Sale will be advertised next month and has a sale volume of 2 MMBF with approximately 600 acres treated.

The Whitaker Bridge abutment project, which crosses the Blackfoot River upstream from Johnsrud Park, was scheduled to begin this week to replace the old wooden abutment with concrete. Due to problems with the contract the project will be postponed until next year.

QUESTIONS:

Richard Young: Does money impair progress?

Nancy Anderson: Projects are completed based on the budget each year, which doesn't mean that projects do not get completed but more a matter of when they get completed.

Rick Hotaling – Butte Field Office

Personnel: Mary Figarelle, the new Assistant Field Manager (non-renewable) started this month; Huey Long, our soil scientist retired in April and the position was not filled; Erinn Shirley, a wildlife biologist, is also leaving this month and will hopefully be filled.

The Butte Resource Management Plan (RMP) has been delayed due to a contract dispute and the contract has been terminated. Currently a rough draft is being reviewed internally. We anticipate a draft RMP will go to the RAC for review this January.

The Golden Sunlight Mine Expansion EIS is still in progress with the final draft TBA. BLM has received a proposal for a wind farm near the Golden Sunlight Mine from a company called Wind Hunter. We have requested a project coordinator to assist us.

QUESTIONS:

Richard Young: How many wind towers are proposed?

Rick Hotaling: A total of 50, 40 of which are on BLM.

Ben Deeble: What is the site capacity?

Rick Hotaling: Capacity exceeds the number of towers planned.

Rob McCulloch: Is this project on par with the one up in Judith Gap?

Rick Hotaling: Yes, the same company.

Jack Kirkley: Who is doing bird counts in the proposed area?

Rick Hotaling: We have studies to monitor and document both spring and fall bird migrations.

Pat Flowers: Will the towers be near the skyline?

Rick Hotaling: The proposal has the towers near the top, with ½ standing above the skyline. Geotechnical studies are also being completed to determine if the site is stable enough to support the wind towers.

Rick Hotaling:

The Graymont Mine has requested a life of mine expansion to the south into an area of unexploded ordnance (UXO) near the National Guard training range. The Legislative EIS for the Limestone Hills Training Area Withdrawal (National Guard) is moving through the Dept. of Defense bureaucracy slowly, and we have reminded them that it must be complete by 2014. We are hoping to facilitate a meeting in which the appropriate people from the Dept. of Defense may attend to improve progress.

The Iron Mask Ranch acquisition with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will receive final funding to finish the project by year end. This area is important winter wildlife habitat.

In the Helena valley, the Causeway Exchange with PPL Montana near the White Sandy campground is nearly complete. BLM exchanged some land with a landlocked private landowner to improve access.

The bighorn sheep habitat improvement project near the Graymont Mine will end by October 1 due to hunting season. The project consisted of burning and mechanical treatments to improve habitat.

The Fish to Heart stewardship project received interest from 56 bidders for fuels reduction as a result of the Healthy Forest Initiative. The stewardship project is also trying to get involvement from non-profits as well.

The OHV portion of the travel management plan for the Clancy Unionville area signed in 2000 was implemented this year. A right of way issue has come up with a subdivision requesting access through the BLM. No problems are expected as long as the BLM road meets county standards.

QUESTIONS:

Richard Young: Does the number of board feet for a project encourage bidders?

Rick Hotaling: With the case of the Fish to Heart project, there are many nice trees in the sale and private landowners have allowed access to the area. Many bidders are hoping that adjacent USFS will also implement treatments.

Ben Deeble: Do stewardship projects with the BLM work the same as the USFS?

Tim Bozorth: Funds generated from these stewardship projects can be used to fund other projects within the office, similar to the USFS.

Pat Flowers: What involvement from the RAC would you like to see on the RMP?

Rick Hotaling: When the draft is completed, input from the RAC will be requested, especially for the travel management portion.

Tim Bozorth – Dillon Field Office

Watershed assessments have been the priority this season, namely the South Tobacco Roots, Blacktail, and Beaverhead West (to be assessed next season). Implementation in the Centennials, Sage Creek, and the Highlands, as a result of previous assessments, has also been a priority. One project in the Centennials has been the timber project in the beetle killed trees, which includes timber sales, firewood cutting, and burning. Trees were marked this summer with the timber sale offered this October. Another timber sale is under way in Barton Gulch, which is tied to the Ruby watershed assessment.

The RMP was signed February 6 and we are currently working under its provisions and implementation of the plan. Currently the travel management portion is under emphasis, which includes public education, putting up road signs, and updating the travel maps in conjunction with the USFS in early 2007.

QUESTIONS:

Richard Young: Revising the maps is also coordinated with the USFS? The road closures are sometimes unclear.

Tim Bozorth: We are coordinating with the USFS and further clarifying the maps and signs. Seasonal road closures will remain the same.

Tim Bozorth:

The fuel reduction/encroachment project in the Upper Horse Prairie is still underway. USFS fire crews have helped us prepare sites in the Upper Horse Prairie and Camp Creek for prescribed fires. However, due to over-spending on fire suppression this year, our money was pulled to complete the burns this month. We are still planning to complete the burns, as we have already changed grazing schedules for the year to accommodate the projects.

We are also currently working on a land exchange on the Big Hole River due to lack of public access. There was a briefing for the state office and we are working to get the appraisal for our lands. The BLM offered lands are already permitted to the landowner involved in the exchange. The landowner wants to improve production on the section of BLM he would acquire through the exchange.

QUESTIONS:

Pat Flowers: How many acres will the BLM acquire?

Tim Bozorth: 95 acres with 1 mile of river access between Glen and Notch Bottom. People will have walking access only; we do not plan to develop it.

Ben Deeble: How does the landowner plan to increase productivity?

Tim Bozorth: He plans to do some seeding and more intensely managing the land, with the hopes of increasing AUMS from 3 to 12. Wildlife use of the area is mostly antelope and some upland birds.

Pat Flowers: How soon will the exchange be complete?

Tim Bozorth: We are in the very beginning stage and foresee a number of years before completion.

Tim Bozorth:

Personnel: The law enforcement officer retired in April and we hope the new person will accept today and start mid-way through hunting season. The lead fuels management position became vacant this spring and we hope to have the list soon to select his replacement to start before January.

So far there have only been small fires, except the Clark's Canyon fire which burned approximately 15,400 acres and was started by heavy equipment working in the area. The area burned was comprised of 50% BLM, 45% private, and 5% State ownership. We had great help with limited resources available. A team from BLM has already examined the fire rehabilitation with the main issues of concern including fence replacement and finding places for the permitted livestock to graze. Burned areas are rested for two growing seasons prior to grazing.

The Ermont project is underway with Colman Construction of Dillon to finish the work this fall including reseeding, cleaning up mine tailings, as well as other safety issues. There is another project near Mill Creek to clean up mine tailings and waste materials.

Activity has started on an EIS for energy corridors. One proposal is for an energy right of way for power coming from Canada through Townsend, MT, through an area north of Virginia City to I-15 and south through Medicine Lodge and Big Sheep Creek. The area required is very large (up to 2 miles wide) with very tall towers.

QUESTIONS:

Ben Deeble: Will there also be a natural gas line? Where is the power going to?

Tim Bozorth: We don't know for sure yet, the power is going to Las Vegas and Phoenix.

David Schulz: Will the new lines go near the existing ones?

Tim Bozorth: We have encouraged them to follow the interstate as much as possible to reduce the impacts, and we did not realize the amount of area required for the lines to go through.

Jack Kirkley: Does the power generated come from coal?

Tim Bozorth: Most of it comes from natural gas in Alberta.

Ben Deeble: This would be devastating to the scenic byway in Big Sheep Creek and Medicine Lodge as well as the habitat. Does the BLM negotiate to mitigate the impacts of these projects?

Tim Bozorth: In Wyoming, energy companies have purchased habitat of equal or greater value to replace area lost due to energy development, but they are still refining proposals.

Jack Kirkley: What happened to the Dyce Creek cable unit in the goshawk territory?

Tim Bozorth: We are still working on it with Elkhorn Hot Springs. If we do harvest the unit there will be seasonal restrictions and we do not know if they will be able to fulfill the terms of the contract. We have marked a buffer around the nests as well.

Francis Auld: Is the pipeline already proposed above Townsend?

Tim Bozorth: Yes the area above Townsend has already been planned. I will get you contact information to inquire further.

RAC Briefing on the White Sandy Campsite Development – Brad Rixford, Butte Field Office

For the briefing please see the handout which outlines projected costs and more specifics on the project. At the November RAC meeting we will entertain a formal discussion after our business plan is complete. Currently, we are trying to reach a cooperative agreement with Montana FWP

to share in maintenance and labor for the campsite. The camping fees we propose are comparable to other campsites in the area at \$10 per site and \$50 for group reservations.

QUESTIONS:

Richard Young: Could you give some more specifics about where the campsite is located?

Brad Rixford: It is near the Causeway right at Hauser Lake.

Richard Young: How do you decide on the number of campsites?

Brad Rixford: A working technical group determined the capacity as well as the amenities we would offer.

Ben Deeble: What kind of revenue do you expect to have?

Brad Rixford: We expect approximately \$10,000 to \$12,000 our first year.

Rick Hotaling: This project doesn't cost us (BLM), the PPLM have to pay for the expenses as well as FWP.

Pat Flowers: Is operation and maintenance covered by PPLM?

Brad Rixford: Most is covered by PPL funds, and in later years by the fees generated at the site. We can't receive more funds to cover this campsite.

Pat Flowers: Is FWP providing a seasonal to help?

Brad Rixford: Yes, it will be a shared seasonal but we are still working on that.

Ben Deeble: Are amenities the same as at Black Sandy?

Brad Rixford: There are no overnight docks and no flush toilets, however it is more developed than at Canyon Ferry. The fee season will be from mid-May to the end of September due to inclement weather affecting road access. I would be happy to set up a visit if anyone would like to visit the site and meet with FWP.

Joyce Thompson: Who is coordinating from FWP?

Brad Rixford: Bob Walker, Craig Marr and others.

Madison River Special Recreation Permits

Tim Bozorth: BLM requires outfitters to have special recreation permits on lands adjacent to rivers. The Dillon Field Office is currently working with MT FWP to develop a plan for issuing these permits on the Madison River and at the same time MT FWP is developing commercial use permit rules and fees. By next season we are hoping to have data collected and a program designed as well as seeking funding for a permanent and seasonal river ranger. By January 1, BLM and FWP anticipate full development of the special recreation permit fees and rules. The next step will be to inform the public and affected parties, conduct NEPA compliance and send out application forms. The program will be implemented in 2007 and we will conduct compliance and monitoring on the Madison River. By 2008 we hope to receive feedback to further fine tune the program.

QUESTIONS:

Ben Deeble: Is this just being done for the Madison River or in other areas as well?

Tim Bozorth: Just the Madison River for this project.

Pat Flowers: We also think it makes more sense for the commercial rules to be finalized before carrying it to other areas. There is an issue with the shuttle drivers and FWP does not want that included in their plan, the BLM will deal with that issue. Private landowners have expressed concern about the amount of use in the upper Madison and they wanted to begin their own data

collection and documentation and work with FWP on this project. Please see the two hand outs, one of which is the Commercial Use Permit Fee Rule draft and Commercial Use Rules.

Richard Young: Are you planning to limit commercial use?

Pat Flowers: Guidelines are currently in place addressing commercial use, and the FWP process began with some letters of concern. We then appointed a citizen committee to assess the nature of the recreational use and to determine the conflict. Then after the problem was identified and data collected, the citizen committee begins with the least intrusive alternative to correct the problem.

Tim Bozorth: Through the commercial use rules we will have all outfitters under permit, and the river management rules are a different process.

David Schulz: At the bridge dedication several comments were made by those present about the recreational impact on the river.

Tim Bozorth: Both in state and out of state use.

Robin Cunningham: Use has increased in all types of recreational areas on the Madison.

David Schulz: The communities in Ennis and surrounding areas benefit economically from the recreation on the river.

Robin Cunningham: Will the shuttle drivers also have to carry a permit?

Tim Bozorth: The BLM requires that they have a permit with no drivers exempted.

Robin Cunningham: This will affect the driver's liability, there is limited insurance available to the shuttle drivers and the insurance available is very expensive.

Tim Bozorth: That is why we are coordinating this process with FWP.

Joyce Thompson: Is use different in the upper and lower Madison? Do commercial outfitters use the lower?

Tim Bozorth: Use is different. The lower has more floaters, some of that is commercial, but very different from the upper in that there is much less fishing in the lower. There are also issues with the parking lot--too many people and cars getting blocked in.

David Schulz: We received a letter from a landowner concerned about reducing the speed on the highway and wanted a speed study conducted. They also wanted to stop trucks from driving this route.

Robin Cunningham: We have been waiting for BLM/FWP SRP coordination. How much are the permit fees and where does the money collected go?

Tim Bozorth: Fees will go to administration and infrastructure maintenance. We want to integrate the fees with FWP and possibly an FWP employee could be located with Susan in our BLM office in Ennis.

Robin Cunningham: The FWP employee will be a cost savings? Where does the FWP portion come from?

Pat Flowers: Funding begins with a grant application to carry the project for the first 2 years and get it up and running. Then the fees collected will carry the employee in subsequent years and by PPL.

Robin Cunningham: Who decides how much money comes from PPL?

Tim Bozorth: There is an existing board who decides.

Pat Flowers: This plan has been "triggered" by recreational use, so "Yes" in response to Richard's earlier question. The project will be a challenge but we have a good foundation.

Tim Bozorth: We will keep the council informed of our progress, but we will probably not have too much new information for the November meeting.

Robin Cunningham: The same situation has occurred in the Blackfoot, and there were no recreation restrictions put in place—outfitters were just required to have a permit.

Weed Wash Project

Tim Bozorth: With the help of our Weed Technician, Mike Mooney, we have received a \$4,000 grant to offer car washes at a reduced price to hunters that washes the under-carriage of a vehicle at the Mini Car Wash. They pay \$3 instead of \$7. Mike Mooney and Jack Eddy are also planning to use some of the money to make a sticker for those who receive the weed wash so private landowners who decided not to allow access due to weeds will see it. Hopefully we will regain access on some of these lands.

QUESTIONS:

Richard Young: Are you concerned about advertising the service so more people hear of it? Possibly you could hang a large banner across the main street advertising it.

Tim Bozorth: We advertise in the paper and put up flyers around town.

Jack Kirkley: Do hunters have to present their hunting license to receive the car wash?

David Schulz: When we did the weed wash we limited it by vehicle, and the weed wash helped us improve public awareness and interest in the project.

Ben Deeble: When will the weed wash be available?

Tim Bozorth: During general rifle season.

Joyce Thompson: There has been a lot of information published for weed awareness. Frankly the people who need to read the information do not, and I think what we really need is more people working on the ground rather than more published weed pamphlets.

Pat Flowers: A banner is a good idea to inform people of the weed wash.

Sage Creek: Issues and Discussion

Tim Bozorth: Thank you again to Pat Fosse for putting the field trip together and thank you to those who were able to attend. If there are any questions or comments on the trip we would really appreciate your input.

QUESTIONS:

Rob McCulloch: How were the sites chosen?

Tim Bozorth: Seasonal employees gather data on the sites and all stream reaches that come out to be Non-functioning, Functioning at Risk, or low Proper Functioning Condition are assessed by the Inter-disciplinary (ID) team. The range and wildlife staffs help coordinate the sites we go to for upland sites based on monitoring or if it is an area of special concern.

Jack Kirkley: We saw a clear indication of what was done on upland monitoring sites, but there doesn't seem to be any congruence between USFS and BLM riparian impacts/monitoring. Why are the standards different?

Tim Bozorth: We have different philosophy; our grazing systems try to balance all activities in the allotment and promote maximum diversity. BLM looks at long term health using guidelines rather than strict standards. We use stubble heights, streambank alteration, and woody browse methods as guidelines NOT as standards. The standards that the USFS uses were implemented due to a lawsuit.

Jack Kirkley: Is the BLM concerned that they will have to endure a lawsuit similar to the one the USFS dealt with?

Tim Bozorth: There is always a chance that someone may try, however we have good supporting documentation of our decisions. The USFS has not even been able to meet their standards and guidelines that were set. We set up our grazing systems so that we do meet our guidelines.

Jack Kirkley: Do you use the Montana Riparian Association guidelines to document streams?

Tim Bozorth: The Montana Riparian Wetland Association has guidelines for assessing streams that we use as a monitoring tool to evaluate trend in our streams.

Richard Young: Does the BLM look at water quality itself, such as bacteria or macroinvertebrates for fish habitat?

Tim Bozorth: We have done some macroinvertebrate inventories in the past. We coordinate with watershed TMDL activities and provide data, mostly riparian and PFC data. We also have some monitoring of channel morphology.

Richard Young: DEQ is supposed to be completing water quality inventories but they are under-funded.

Tim Bozorth: We work closely with DEQ, and they receive copies of our watershed work. We have received positive feedback regarding our methods from them.

Jack Kirkley: The aspen problem was mentioned during the field trip, where aspen are disappearing due to browsing, I wonder whether we should be more proactive in protecting aspen and deterring browse or even building exclosures. Is BLM looking into these things?

Tim Bozorth: Pat Fosse wants to test if burning will improve aspen regeneration in the clones that are dying. She would also like to see if building biodegradable fences that disintegrate in 10 years will increase seedling survivability. There is an aspen recovery project in the Centennials that involves removing timber to help open up areas where aspen grow and improve regeneration. Hopefully by opening up many areas there will be enough aspen to survive browsing pressures without fencing.

Ben Deeble: Areas that were over 5 years into drought paired with cattle activity had very little weeds on the sites we visited yesterday. Compared to other areas in the state we have a great opportunity to look at such a large area without weeds. Weeds are a threat to sagegrouse habitat and we should also start treating cheatgrass as an invasive weed. Anything we could do as a RAC to tackle the cheatgrass issue would be good.

David Schulz: I agree that we should try to target cheatgrass. Often times in other weed treatment areas cheatgrass comes in after the other weed dies.

Ben Deeble: We have seen cheatgrass begin to invade further north and at higher elevations. The Matador's 30 year experiment with the Hormay grazing system was interesting, and there is still a lively debate on whether it should be used across landscape. The photos taken are a tremendous opportunity to present a fair look at how it worked in their ranch.

Tim Bozorth: The photos from the Matador will go to the MSU Hormay collection in the library. There may be potential for a graduate project. We use his system where it fits not as the ultimate tool and only as one tool of many to use.

Ben Deeble: Maybe there is an opportunity to partner with the Matador/BLM/ MSU to assess the system together.

Richard Young: I really learned a lot on the field tour and Pat Fosse did a great job.

Public Comment

Marilyn Krause: I suggest we move on because there is no interested public present at this time.

Future Meeting on November 29th in Butte at 9:00 a.m.

Marilyn Krause: Can everyone still make the next meeting on November 29th? We have not heard from the Washington Office on who the newly appointed members will be. We will also set dates for the 2007 RAC meetings at that time. Are there any topics you would like to address at the next meeting?

Rick Hotaling: We have been approached by the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners to address a conflict on BLM land north of Helena involving people target shooting, motorcycles, and horseback riders. This is usually a very controversial issue with a lot of recreational issues.

The group decided to make this a discussion topic for the November 29th meeting with the idea that a subgroup may be established to make recommendations to BLM.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

/s/ Robin Cunningham
Robin Cunningham, Vice Chair

09//21/06
Date

Western MT RAC Meeting Notes
Butte Field Office
11/29/2006

Members Present: Richard Young, Corby Anderson, Steve Flynn, Dan Lucas, David Schulz, Jack Kirkley, Francis Auld, Mitzi Rossillon, Joyce Thompson, Nate Finch, Pat Flowers, Ben Deeble, Robin Cunningham

Members Absent: Garry Williams, Dennis Phillipi

BLM: Rick Hotaling, Butte Field Manager, Nancy Anderson, Missoula Field Manager, Tim Bozorth, Dillon Field Manager, Marilyn Krause, Butte Field Office. Afternoon: Cindy Staszak, MT State Office Supervisory Land Use Specialist, Chris Miller, State Office Recreation Lead for MT/Dakotas, Mary Apple, MT State Office External Affairs Officer.

Guests: Joni Packard, US Forest Service Assistant Program Manager for Developed Recreation, Region One, Missoula.

Rick Hotaling welcomed everyone to the RAC meeting, and introductions were made. Marilyn Krause reviewed agenda items with the group and asked if the RAC would like to continue receiving the Rangeland Health Assessments. Manager updates and other handouts were provided to RAC members.

North Hills Shooting Issue:

Pat Zurcher, Outdoor Recreation Planner/Butte Field Office (BFO), gave a presentation regarding user conflicts in the North Hills Area. The North Hills is a popular recreation area approximately 3 miles north of Lake Helena, which receives use yearlong by a wide range of recreational users. Presently, there are several dispersed, user created shooting areas in the North Hills which are not suitable or appropriate for shooting (too close to a road or unsafe line of fire). Other shooting issues in the area include vandalism, littering and resource damage.

Pat requested the assistance of the RAC, to help resolve this issue in a manner acceptable to recreational shooters as well as other area users. He asked if the RAC would be willing to form a subgroup to work on the issue, and with public input and BLM assistance, arrive at a viable solution. Pat presented some possible solutions to be considered, including the possibility of establishing a patented Recreation and Public Purposes Act (RMPP) site in an old quarry site. The BLM needs to come up with a process and a range of solutions applicable to other areas. Discussion followed:

Rick Hotaling: This is not a simple issue for BLM to manage. There's a lot of public land in the Helena area and the Helena Valley is growing. We will continue to see more of these types of user conflicts in the urban interface. We could stop the shooting here, but we'll just move it to somewhere else, either onto BLM or the forest lands. So we want to look at more than simply putting a restriction on this area, which would have a lot of issues itself. We haven't yet heard from all the players out there. Hunting and recreational shooting is an appropriate use of public lands. So we thought we could come to the RAC to ask you to form a subgroup and get a recommendation from the RAC. We need guidance or a springboard into the next user conflict we might have in the urban interface.

Jack Kirkley asked if this is mainly a safety issue or if it's also a noise issue for people in the area?

Pat Zurcher: This is primarily a safety issue. Most of the shooting takes place right off the side of the road and there have been a few encounters where people are concerned with their safety.

Rick Hotaling: It's also a big resource damage issue. You saw all the trees shot in half and all sorts of trash is being left behind from their shooting. Our signs and the power poles are also being shot up.

Pat Zurcher: There is a wide-spread recognized need for designated shooting ranges in the Helena area. However, as an agency, BLM cannot designate a shooting range due to liability and HAZMAT considerations. But if a suitable site was determined, it may be possible to work with the county government or a shooting organization, to establish a patented Recreation and Public Purposes Site

(R&PP). This is where the BLM can give away or sell at a discount, a small section of land to be used for that purpose. The county commissioners may be willing to work directly with a subgroup on this.

Pat Flowers: We have the same problem on Forest Service land, south of Bozeman. Your proposed solution makes sense. People need places to sight-in guns so we need to develop some public ranges. That should help solve the problem. Once you have that available, you have to write tickets; you have to have a penalty clause. But I question whether the solution is to create a RAC subgroup to help facilitate public discussion on this and develop alternatives? Maybe this should be more of a community based solution. Perhaps you should create a Helena based group including the BLM, Fish Wildlife & Parks, sportsman's groups, hikers, horseback users, county government; all sitting down around the table and coming up with a solution, rather than a RAC subgroup.

Rick Hotaling: The RAC subgroup allows us to do exactly what you're suggesting we do. If we did that on our own, and we came up with some alternatives, we could basically be tripped up by violating the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). According to the RAC charter, the subgroup does not have to be made up of purely RAC members. But the subgroup has to look like the RAC, with the same number of people representing each category. The subgroup then makes a recommendation to the RAC; the RAC then makes a recommendation to the BLM.

Pat Zurcher: It sounds like the county is willing to help resolve the issue. Hopefully a solution could be arrived at fairly quickly. According to our LEO, 80% of the people shooting in that area are hunters sighting-in their rifles, so having a designated range would accomplish a lot.

Dan Lucas: If that is designated as an R&PP, what liability would the county take on and have they considered that?

Rick Hotaling and **Tim Bozorth** spoke to similar situations. In Broadwater County, the BLM issued an R&PP for a shooting range just outside of Townsend. The BLM issued it to the county, the county then leased it to Broadwater Gun Club and the gun club provided the liability insurance. The gun clubs don't have the same issues with HAZMAT (lead) as the BLM. Dillon is doing the same thing with the county and the Rod & Gun Club there.

Rick Hotaling: They end up owning the land. We patent the land to whatever group it is; the BLM does not lease the land. And there are stipulations that go along with the patent. You can't be an exclusive club; you have to allow anybody to join. It works well working with the county because we can waive fees and the county just turns around and leases it. It is a process we've used in several areas.

Ben Deeble asked why the area gets so much use. Is it because it's free and easy or is there a lack of shooting facilities elsewhere?

Pat Zurcher: It's both. There's a lack of shooting facilities in the area. There is no other convenient area near-by.

Rick Hotaling: The Prickly Pear Sportsman Association has a rifle range, but it is way up the Lincoln road, so it becomes a matter of convenience. There is another range right out of Basin and one in Townsend, but this one is more convenient.

Questions were asked about the feasibility of the quarry site. Pat Zurcher explained that the site is just a short distance up the road from one of the existing shooting areas, it's in an already disturbed area, it is far enough away from private property that the noise shouldn't be an issue, it has a good backdrop, and should be long enough to accommodate a shooting range (there is possibly 100 yards to work with).

Dave Schulz: What issues are tied to doing the ground disturbance in order to create the site?

Pat Zurcher: We would need to do an Environmental Assessment.

Rick Hotaling: If we do an R&PP lease, once it goes to the county, they do whatever they need to do. It becomes private land.

Mary Figarelle: A Right-Of-Way would need to be issued to those people, for access across the BLM.

Rick Hotaling: So there are a lot of issues. It's not an easy thing. The county needs to be willing to do this and a club would need to step up. Then the area would need to be managed. A concern is that all the initial meetings have been with the county commission and a couple of local people who use the area. But the general public has no idea what is being proposed. Using a subgroup of the RAC would help us get comments from the public and work out a solution that could be implemented.

Dave Schulz: Have Lewis and County commissioners been approached about this concept of the RAC participation?

Rick Hotaling: Yes – we have talked to them about this. They are interested in having either a commissioner or their planner work as a representative on this.

Brad Rixford: The real focus of this is to resolve this emerging issue; our intent is not to open this up as a big community planning effort.

Joyce Thompson asked about the possibility of additional sites.

Pat Zurcher said there may be, but currently this is the “hot spot on the map”. Part of the approach here is to come up with a process and range of viable solutions that might be applicable to other areas.

Mitzi Rossillon: What Joyce is talking about would require some coordination with the Forest Service.

Mary Figarelle: With public meetings, the BLM may learn of alternative sites that the public are already using.

Dan Lucas: What we are discussing are issues that will come up at the meetings. There are two questions now before the RAC (1) do we want to have a subgroup of the RAC to facilitate a decision through the BLM to avoid FACA problems and (2) if so, how many or who will serve in that capacity?

Richard Young made a motion that the RAC form a subgroup to address this issue and Pat Flowers seconded the motion. The motion was voted in by the RAC. It was suggested that since Garry Williams is from the Helena area, perhaps he should spearhead the subgroup, although he would need to be consulted on this. David Schulz volunteered to be a RAC representative for this subgroup. Pat Flowers suggested he would like someone from his office to be on the committee.

Marilyn Krause pointed out that according to the RAC charter, the actual make-up of the subgroup is by the approval of the council chairperson, Dan Lucas, and the Field Manager, in this case Rick Hotaling.

Butte Resource Management Plan (RMP) Briefing:

Tim LaMarr, the RMP project manager/team lead, gave an overview of the Butte Field Office RMP. Due to administrative boundary changes, Butte Field Office lands are currently managed under two primary planning documents: the Headwaters RMP and the Dillon Management Framework Plan. The existing plans lack management direction to adequately address current management issues such as vegetation management, travel planning, and various wildlife issues. Initial public scoping for the RMP occurred over 60 days in late 2003/early 2004. Additional public scoping meetings were held, pertaining to site-specific travel planning in November/December 2004 and again in the summer of 2005.

Planning issues addressed in the RMP are as follows:

- (1) Vegetation Communities – restoring more “historic” conditions to vegetation, including forest, grassland/shrublands, and riparian areas.
- (2) Wildlife/Special Status Species – restore habitats to more “historic” conditions; manage to promote conservation of special status species.
- (3) Travel Management – revising Field Office – wide area designations and development of site-specific travel plans in five travel planning areas encompassing approximately 380 miles of road.
- (4) Recreation (including Special Recreation Management Areas and ROS).
- (5) Special Designation Management (including ACECs – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, National Trails, Wild & Scenic Rivers and Wilderness Study Areas).

Tim gave an overview of the alternatives proposed in the RMP. At this point the Butte Field Office has a working document. The original RMP schedule has been delayed by a number of issues. There was a formal State Office/Washington Office review of the draft document in August/September 2006. The need for Chapter 4 revisions was identified and revisions are in progress. The Draft RMP/EIS will hopefully be out in February or March 2007. The Proposed RMP should be out to the public by approximately December 2007; the Record of Decision (ROD) in approximately June 2008.

Questions/Discussion related to the RMP:

Joyce Thompson asked about the open areas referred to in Alternative A.

Tim LaMarr: We were looking to move some of those into the limited category – most of those acres are scattered tracts in the Elkhorns.

Joyce: Why wasn't that limited by the Three State OHV Travel Plan?

Rick Hotaling: The Elkhorn travel management area was excluded from that and probably shouldn't have been, so we're fixing it here.

Dan Lucas: Why would there still be 287 acres classified as open?

Rick: Because we have an area by Radersburg that was identified in the Three State OHV plan. It gives people the opportunity to drive cross-country.

Ben Deeble: You mention road decommissioning in a preferred alternative. Are those 53 miles of designated routes or do those in part include user-created roads?

Tim: We looked at designated routes. We have very few actual designated routes compared to what we see out there. It's probably a mix, but the majority of the 53 miles is mainly user-created or project created routes.

Ben: And what would decommissioning involve?

Tim: It would vary depending on the site. The idea would be to make the road not create any resource problems, to address erosion concerns with water bars or pulling out culverts that might clog. It may eventually involve doing some ripping and reseeding. But for fairly innocuous routes, already growing in with vegetation, we might just make sure it's barricaded well.

Marilyn Krause: Do you anticipate the draft that comes out in February will look somewhat similar to what you presented today?

Tim: Yes – we hope so. There could be one more revision.

Joyce: What was your baseline for designated routes? And user-created trails – did you include historical use?

Tim: As far as historical use, we had interaction with some individuals who knew about these areas. It is an accumulative cataloging of the roads we do our maintenance on with some regularity, pretty much the more heavily used roads and minor spurs that people use for dispersed recreation.

Nate Finch: You state you have approximately 7500 acres of land available for disposal. What is that?

Tim: For the most part, land exchanges. They have to meet certain criteria to be in the disposal pool and those are spelled out in the plan. Generally they are surrounded by private lands, they are difficult to manage, we may have no public access to a lot of them – so the team identified those.

Nate: How do you deal with grazing permittees that hold permits on those properties when you go to sell those?

Rick Hotaling: If they are an adjoining land owner, they get first offer to acquire that land if it is going to be disposed of by selling; we send out a letter two years in advance to make the permittee aware of the situation. The reason there are only 7500 acres listed is because the BFO has already exchanged many of our parcels. What we have left is a lot of very small tracts, and most of that has already been offered in different land exchanges and never accepted.

Nate: They're given an appraised value – that's where you start?

Rick: Right – they are appraised for the best use of the land. If it's grazing land, it's appraised at range land versus a subdivision.

Richard Young: When you say limited travel management you are talking about designated roads, correct? Also – I have heard of the possibility of air strips in the Sleeping Giant area.

Rick Hotaling: The BLM is not aware of any air strip in that area.

Jack Kirkley: Regarding land exchanges - I don't see many in Park or Gallatin counties. Is there more there than I see?

Tim: There isn't a lot there. One of the aspects of the disposal pool that was originally discussed did include a lot of those acres in Park and Gallatin - Paradise Valley parcels. We tried to put in the provision that they would only be relinquished to another agency; State or Forest Service. But we received direction from our State Office that it would not even be on the disposal list. But that's not to say we wouldn't try to work something out with another agency so it stays in public lands.

Dan Lucas: All the alternatives are moving towards the land health standards, which were originally the rangeland health standards. Along with those standards there were a considerable number of guidelines – were those integrated into the preferred alternatives?

Tim: Yes, we basically incorporated that document by reference.

Rick Hotaling: To clarify – those guidelines were developed for livestock grazing. So when you apply them to a recreation project, a lot of them don't apply.

Ben Deeble: How does the RMP deal with the weed issue?

Tim: It's in there. We have acreage ranges for weed treatments. A lot of the proposed acreage ranges for weed treatments are following where we would be doing ground disturbing activities. We had a veg subgroup who worked together to come up with weed alternatives.

Ben: Does the preferred alternative change your weed management at all?

Tim: Maybe a little higher than we're doing now, but we wanted to be realistic. Basically what you will see in the environmental consequences section is that no matter what we do, we will continue to lose ground. Some spread of weeds will continue.

Dan Lucas: How much influence did budgetary concerns have on the development of the alternatives?

Tim: It was considered to an extent. Ideally we would like to do a lot of veg treatment. But in reality, there is only so much we can do. With unlimited budgets, of course we would like to do quite a bit more. But that is not the reality.

Steve Flynn: In your plan did you consider stewardship contracting as a method of accomplishing some of your other activities?

Tim: Yes, we do have some language in the alternatives about using stewardship contracting wherever we can to accomplish as many things as possible.

Richard Young: A couple of sessions ago there was discussion about forming a subgroup for a travel plan in the in Scratchgravel, Marysville area – is that going to be an issue or did that get resolved?

Tim: Those were two of the three subgroups we did. We did have a group look at the Scratchgravels and came up with recommendations and we had another group look at Marysville as well.

Richard: Are they satisfied?

Tim: They didn't reach consensus in the Scratchgravels; they reached consensus on some things, and we incorporated what they reached consensus on. With Marysville, the working group did reach consensus.

Rick Hotaling: It wasn't our working group. It was the Lewis and Clark County commission's working group. We took their recommendation and based on that, we know that those issues did not meet consensus.

Joyce Thompson: Could you please clarify what you mean by ACEC's. What will that type of designation do for an area like the Ringing Rocks?

Tim: For each ACEC we've identified special management, basically management that is above and beyond what's in the RMP. We were going to propose Ringing Rocks as a mineral withdrawal, but it's already withdrawn. We had some language about limiting motorized use around it, and we proposed management for vegetation management projects not impacting the scenery in that area.

Rick: One of the big things the ACEC does is that under our general management, someone could get a permit for taking rocks from the Ringing Rocks area. Under the ACEC, management would say you can't do that; that is one management action that is not allowed up there, to keep that area unique.

Dave Schulz: Regarding weeds, you mentioned the fact that you would continue to lose ground. What do you base that on and is there anything in the RMP to turn that around?

Tim: It's based on reality and looking at what we know about rates of spread. In order to turn the trend to a rate of decrease, it would take incredible amounts of money and infrastructure we don't have. We do a lot of cooperative agreement stuff. But it's just the reality of the situation. We can slow down the trend, but can't reverse it.

Jack Kirkley: On the Humbug Spires ACEC, I like the idea of maintaining it if there is no wilderness designation, but would the management just be status quo? And in regard to grazing, is it just a trailing area?

Tim: My understanding is that there is a fringe of it that is used to some degree, but it is kind of a trailing area. The intent with the proposed ACEC management is that BLM would keep management similar to

what it is now. If it does become a designated wilderness, the ACEC would be dropped once a wilderness management plan is developed.

Marilyn Krause: The Draft will hopefully be out in February, followed by a 90 day comment period. Sometime in that timeframe I am assuming we'll have a RAC meeting. At that point you can choose to comment as a group or as individuals.

It was decided that Marilyn would send around a sheet for members to sign, indicating whether they prefer a CD or a hard copy (probably 2 volumes) of the RMP.

Recreation RAC Overview/Fee Related Subgroup:

Cindy Staszak gave an overview of Recreation on Public Lands, the Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) and the role of the RAC in the REA. She stated: the bottom line is, at the end of the discussion, the RAC needs to make a decision as to how it is going to handle fee issues. In the legislation, it requires the RACs to be involved in the fee decisions; in making recommendations.

There are a wide variety of recreational opportunities on BLM and Forest Service lands. In 2005 alone, there were over 600 million visits to BLM and Forest Service recreation sites. Public lands are seeing a tremendous increase in the number of recreation visits, and new types of recreation are developing. Along with that the agencies are seeing sometimes flat budgets or decreasing budgets, so we have challenges in managing recreation. This fee legislation was passed to assist the agencies with handling those challenges.

The Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) was passed in 2004. This act gives federal agencies the authority to charge fees, and stipulates what fees can and can not be charged for. Under REA, fees can not be charged for overlooks and travel areas or for standard amenities for people under the age of 16. The BLM and Forest Service can not charge an entrance fee (NPS can).

The legislation divided fee sites into three different categories:

- Standard amenity (day use fees), where the agency must provide services such as trash, parking, picnicking, or interpretive signs.
- Expanded amenity fees (developed campgrounds) which could include boat launches, cabin rentals, hook-ups, dump stations, shuttles, reservation services, etc.
- Individual Special Recreation Use. (Commercial special recreation permits will not be considered by the RAC).

The legislation set criteria for when to charge fees. Agencies need to:

- Make sure the fees are commensurate with the benefits the public receives at that site.
- Consider the aggregate affect of fees - look at fees being charged for similar services.
- Look at the benefits of charging fees.
- Get input from the RAC on these fees. The BLM RACs will make recommendations on implementation or elimination of fees, expanding or limiting recreation fees, etc.

REA:

- Requires that 80% of the fees must be returned and reinvested in the site from which it was generated.
- Instructed the agencies to come up with an interagency pass for all agencies, good for admission to national parks and visitation at standard amenity sites.
- Requires that the Forest Service and BLM work together to work through these fees, either working with RACs in states where there are existing BLM RACs, or creating Recreational RACs.

Cindy asked the RAC to consider how to handle this. One option would be to form a subcommittee. Or the RAC as a whole could deal with fees. The 3rd option would be to form one fee subcommittee for all

of MT. This did not seem to be a viable solution, because the areas are so diverse in MT. Cindy went over the pros and cons of having a subcommittee versus having the RAC as a whole work on fees. If a subcommittee is formed, it must consist of 7-13 members, representing diverse interests, similar to the RAC. Members of a subcommittee would not be reimbursed for travel expenses. If the RAC as a whole deals with the fees, it could be a considerable workload.

Joni Packard gave an overview of what the Forest Service workload could consist of for the RAC. The Western MT RAC will be dealing with 7 National Forests, all with high recreational use. Across the region there are 1500 developed recreation sites and over 500 of those are fee sites. This year the anticipated work load will be approximately 20-30 proposals for increase in fees on existing fee sites and between 5-10 new fee sites being proposed. The timing of the review is important to the field personnel, to get things in place in time for the 2007 field season. The Forest Service would prefer to lump or bundle their proposals, to streamline the workload for everyone concerned. The intent is for the Forest Service to (1) do all the homework before coming to the RACs; to take care of all the public involvement, mitigate any issues that arise as much as possible and (2) the Forest Service would take on any controversy that arises over the fee issue.

Joni spoke to the Recreation Site Facility Master Planning (RSFMP). With this, the Forest Service is taking a strategic look at developed recreation sites, looking at budget constraints along with changing visitor uses and visitor trends. The RSFMP should give the Forest Service an idea of what it is costing to maintain their facilities and the RSFMP results will play into the fee structure the Forest Service proposes to the RACs. They may propose closing some campgrounds that are receiving very little use, to reserve resources for areas getting more use. The Forest Service plans to invite public comment earlier in the process than they have in the past.

Brad Rixford, Outdoor Recreation Planner/BFO gave a brief overview of the Butte Field Office fee sites: 7 developed fee sites and 1 new site (White Sandy). BLM has a 6 month waiting period requirement for the Federal Register Notice, before charging fees at White Sandy. Cindy Staszak handed out the MT BLM Recreation Guide to RAC members and the Interagency Agreement between BLM & Forest Service.

Recreation Questions/Discussion:

Richard Young: A clarification - The opening and closing of campgrounds has nothing to do with this RAC, correct? The RAC just decides how much you charge?

Joni: The RAC makes a recommendation on the fee proposal. The RAC does not set the fees; the RAC reviews the fees. Both agencies still hold the decision authority on fees.

Richard: The other question is regarding concessionaires – is that a business decision? If it's a large enough campground, do you farm it out?

Joni: That is left up to each individual forest.

Ben Deeble: What is going on right now with the Forest Service budget? Is it in decline?

Joni: The budget has stayed pretty static, with even a slight increase the last year or so. But inflation is eating away at the budget; particularly with the increase in fuel costs. The fee is only part of the mix for providing recreation services, along with appropriated dollars, partnerships, grants, etc. Under REA legislation, it was congress's intent that the more a facility serves the general public, the more the appropriated dollars will cover that. The more specialized the service, it is congress's expectation that the user will pay more of the fee for those services, such as boat ramps, campgrounds, cabins, etc.

Marilyn asked the RAC if they preferred recommending a subgroup or if the RAC would prefer to deal with the issue of fees themselves. This led to discussion of the pros and cons of each option. One of the main concerns of a subgroup would be that the members of the subgroup could not be reimbursed for travel. Several RAC members questioned the redundancy of having a subgroup. Ben Deeble asked about the possibility of establishing a Forest Service Recreation RAC. Joni said they would prefer to use the

existing BLM RAC if possible. There was discussion regarding workload; what the time frame would be for this and how the RAC's input would be received by the agencies.

Cindy: If you develop a subgroup, then the subgroup has to make recommendations to the RAC and the RAC makes recommendations to the BLM or Forest Service. The workload will vary. The Forest Service workload is fairly overwhelming; it could mean a discussion at every meeting.

Mary Apple: The expectation is that you will have decided how you're going to handle this by January. So that's why we are asking you now.

Joni: Ideally we'd like to get on a schedule internally, soliciting fee proposals once/year and then presenting them to the RAC once/year. This first year or two there will be a big bulge of proposals because we've been on hold for so long. Hopefully once on schedule, it will become fairly routine. For this year we would probably have some proposals ready to present in February or March. And then it would be good if we could do something again in the fall. It could be an all day meeting.

Pat Flowers: What was the previous process for setting fees and how was the public involved in that process, and will this be the only public participation opportunity for fee setting?

Joni: We've actually been collecting fees since the 60s, under the Land and Water Conservation Act. Those fees were set by the District Ranger, usually based on the cost of operations, public benefit, comparables with the private sector, etc. Under the fee demo program, they were testing the feasibility of fee retention and there was not much public involvement at that time. We now have to do public notice, notify local public officials and post news releases. For new fee sites, we have to do federal register notice only and we intend to do that. If the RAC wants to do even more public outreach, they can.

Pat: If what we get is a package with the original proposal, the background information and public response to that, then we can work with that. We could try it and if it becomes overwhelming we could regroup and take a different approach.

Questions were asked regarding what happens if the agencies disagree with the RAC's recommendations. According to Dan Lucas, there is a provision in the legislation that says if the Secretary rejects the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, they have to issue a notice in writing, listing the reasons why.

Mary: We have to notify congress if we override your recommendations. So, we don't want to do that.

Joni: Our Regional Forester will take the recommendation very seriously. If a recommendation isn't accepted, we have to notify the senate/house subcommittee. The congress doesn't make the decision; we just have to inform them. But hopefully it won't come to that.

Cindy: Yes, if the RAC made a recommendation that didn't agree with the proposal, then we would first discuss it internally with the State Director, if we couldn't come to agreement it would go to the Washington Office, and if we were to decide to go against the RAC recommendation we'd have to write letters to both houses of congress.

Several RAC members expressed they were uncomfortable with this task, feeling they were acting as a cover organization for the agencies' decisions.

Mary: I don't think you should think of it as a cover. It was put in there to enhance public participation in this decision making process on fees, and they saw the RACs as a vehicle to get public participation because you are already set up to do that.

Dan Lucas: It sounds like the RAC has been charged with the task of undertaking this, regardless. The choice we have before us is how are we going to deal with it either as the RAC as a whole or appoint a subcommittee or request a subcommittee. One request I would have is that the Forest Service and the BLM coordinate with each other to assure the RAC doesn't get too large of a workload.

Richard Young made a motion that the RAC as a whole accepts this responsibility. The RAC voted to accept the task.

After clarifying the criteria for interest group representation, **Mary Apple** took an informal poll to see if the RAC as a whole met the criteria for a Recreation RAC. All interest groups, except snowmobiling were represented by this RAC. Someone from that interest group will need to be invited to the meetings.

Meeting Dates were set for 2007:

- February 21, 2007 (Wednesday) – in Butte
- May 16, 2007 (Wednesday) – in Missoula
- September 5th, 2007 (Wednesday) – in Dillon
- November 28th, 2007 (Wednesday) – in Butte

Field Office Overviews (handouts provided to RAC members):

Butte Field Office – Rick Hotaling:

- Graymont Mine: The life of mine expansion to the south proposal is being reviewed and a contractor is being solicited by Graymont for the NEPA document. The expansion is proposed into an area of unexploded ordnance (UXO) near the National Guard training area.
- Legislative EIS for the Limestone Hills National Guard Withdrawal: A third tier review of the proposed draft LEIS is being completed by the DOD and DOI. Upon completion of agency review, the draft LEIS will be prepared for public distribution.
- The Iron Mask Ranch Acquisition: Final funding for the acquisition is awaiting approval of the FY 07 budget. This area is an important winter wildlife habitat.
- Causeway Exchange with PPL Montana: There has been no change in progress due to RMP workload and staffing constraints. This action would exchange landlocked BLM land with some land owned by a private landowner, to improve public access in the Hauser Lake area.
- The bighorn sheep habitat improvement project near the Graymont Mine will be completed next year. We were not able to complete the burning this October due to weather constraints. The mechanical treatments were completed prior to hunting season.
- Golden Sunlight Mine: BLM continues to coordinate with MT DEQ to facilitate the completion of the SEIS. Release of the Final SEIS and ROD is pending an agreement between BLM and DEQ on the selected alternative and stipulations.
- Clancy ROW: A Right of Way request has been filed for the Sheep Mountain Road in the Clancy travel management area to access a private subdivision development. The subdivision development would utilize the Sheep Mountain Road and a segment of new road construction would be needed to connect the Sheep Mountain Road to the proposed subdivision. This subdivision is proposed for 20 homes on four private mine sites surrounded by BLM. The subdivision would be located near one access point for OHV trails in the area and an access point for rock climbers.

Dillon Field Office – Tim Bozorth

- Price Creek Salvage/Aspen Treatment and Bean Creek Salvage/Aspen Treatment sold for \$240,000. The Price Creek sale contains 925 acres and 2,060 MBF of live and recent dead conifer timber and 287 MBF of fuel wood. 697 acres (75%) will use ground based equipment and 228 acres (24%) will be helicopter yarded. The Bean Creek sale contains 221 acres and an estimated 621 MBF of live and recent dead conifer timber and 137 MBF of fuel wood. 138 acres (62%) will use ground-based equipment; 83 acres (38%) will be helicopter yarded. We received a protest to this sale that I denied on 11/20/06. The issues raised in the protest were appropriately addressed in the EA.
- The Barton Gulch Sale Selective Shelter wood cut is concluded for the season. Of 200 acres all but 10 acres has been cut and 30 acres yarded via helicopter. The rest will be yarded by helicopter next spring/summer after 5/15.
- The Blacktail and South Tobacco Roots Watershed assessments were completed this summer and we are working on the determinations and EAs. We are also beginning to prepare for the Beaverhead West (85,000 acres) and Red Rock (52,000 acres) watershed assessment for next field season and continuing to implement projects from the watershed assessments completed in past years. The decision on the Sage Creek Watershed that we toured on the field trip this summer is being implemented.

- We are beginning to implement the travel management decisions from the Dillon RMP.
- Numerous trespass situations are taking lots of time to resolve and we are receiving increasing numbers of R-O-W applications. We are working on the Coronado Resources R-O-W above Silver Star and another to a patented mining claim in the Axolotl WSA among numerous others.
- We are uncertain regarding Food Storage Orders (FSOs) for Grizzly Bears. There are FSOs on the Madison District portion of the Beaverhead/Deerlodge N.F. and in the Centennial Mountains from Targhee Pass to Monida Pass. A portion of the Centennial Mountains in Montana that includes several thousand acres of BLM is now considered occupied habitat. We have been proactive loaning out bear resistant panniers and a kitchen, and had 38 pairs of J hooks so we can help get food/meat off the ground. We need to find a way that the public can be successful in complying with food storage on BLM public land. I don't think the USFS FSO will work on BLM dispersed sites in non-forested areas. It has to do mainly with getting a carcass or meat 10 feet off the ground and 100 yards from camp.
- We should know later next week if we will have the necessary resources to proceed with getting outfitters under Special Recreation Permits on the Madison River.

Missoula Field Office – Nancy Anderson

- Personnel: We have made a selection for our Range Management Specialist (RMS) position (vice – Mike Tietmeyer). Our new RMS is Steve Bell. He will report to our office early next year. Steve is currently the RMS for BLM in Belle Fourche, SD.
- We are continuing work in the Hoodoos Watershed which covers approximately 53,000 acres. We had planned to have the EA completed last spring but were delayed. The EA should be completed this week and sent out for public comment.
- Last May we issued a press release and sent out a letter to interested parties regarding a proposal to harvest bug-killed timber in the Garnet Range. We are still working through our lynx analysis. We hope to send out our EA for public review late December.
- We're working on Phase II of our Garnet Stewardship project. The main focus is to reduce hazardous fuels in the vicinity of Garnet Ghost Town and Coloma. The project covers approximately 300 acres and is very labor intensive due to the amount of historical artifacts throughout the project area. We are finishing up the field work. The contract should be prepared by next spring with potential award occurring by early summer.
- The Hayes Stewardship project was awarded to Woodland Restoration, Inc. The project will treat approximately 80 acres along the Lower Blackfoot River near Belmont Creek.
- We are continuing to work on the Flint/Rock Timber Sale. We need to acquire a few more easements before the sale can be offered. The sale volume is approximately 2 MMBF and approximately 600 acres will be treated.
- We have been approached by a company (Ladies in White) that would like to scatter ashes on our lands as a commercial enterprise. We will be doing an EA and issuing a permit.
- We are continuing to work on the Rumsey Road right-of-way request from Granite County. We met with the Commissioners last week to discuss the proposal. Because this road would allow access to the north side of Discovery Ski Basin, we will be requesting additional information on any proposed developments so we can do our effects analysis.

Questions related to Field Office Overviews:

Joyce Thompson asked about the food storage orders – Tim, have you talked to Steve in Ennis about their group?

Tim Bozorth: I've talked to Steve and offered to visit with the group. That is one of our concerns. What we said in the SW Montana Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan was what was not only biologically suitable but also socially acceptable, and the decision was made to put those groups together and take a look at that. We need to coordinate more with those folks. But we are faced with this issue and we are struggling with how to make this issue work. It is difficult with our landscape, the ownership pattern we have and the dispersed recreation use that we have; it's not the same as with developed campgrounds.

Pat Flowers: So you are back to considering food storage orders?

Tim: I've been thinking about it; I just don't know how to make it work. When we'll do it, I don't know. It is a big issue for us that will cause lots of impacts and we'd like to figure out how to make that work. I've reviewed other orders, but I'm still struggling with how to make this successful when there are no trees in the area. I don't see people wanting to put elk 100 yards from camp.

Pat Flowers: Then we need to get together and talk; we have the same concerns.

Richard Young asked about public access across BLM, related to the Clancy ROW.

Rick Hotaling: There will be public access right up to their subdivision. The county may even take it over as a county road, but I can't guarantee they're not going to make it into a gated subdivision. The Sheep Mountain road is still a public road, so there would be no restricted access to the public, on BLM lands.

Joyce Thompson asked about the issue the Missoula Office is looking at regarding scattering ashes as a commercial enterprise – is that a unique request?

Nancy Anderson: It is not prohibited. We will do it under our Special Recreation Permit.

Jack Kirkley: What is the Golden Sunlight issue – is that the wind farm?

Rick Hotaling: That's the Supplemental EIS that's being prepared to address the final reclamation of the Golden Sunlight Mine.

Jack: And where are we on the wind farm at the Sunlight Mine?

Rick: We have an official application in for the wind farm, but it's not being actively pursued right now.

Jack: Who would be the contact person? I know they were doing some assessment on bird migration, on bird use of that ridge, right?

Rick: They will have to do that – they have just started setting that up. They've given us the application and we have given them some feedback on what is required for that particular permit. Right now they are trying to finish up the permit they are doing in N. Valley County. They still want to proceed with the project; they just want to finish that one first before they go on to ours. That could change tomorrow.

Ben Deeble: The conversation on the Rangeland Health Reports needs to be finished up. I appreciate that report and would like to continue seeing it.

Marilyn Krause: We'll get that compiled. It will probably not be until after the first of the year when you get it, but we'll get that information to you.

Agenda Items for the next meeting were suggested:

Pat Flowers: It would be helpful at the next meeting to get a briefing from both the Forest Service and the BLM on the historical process on setting fees and maybe more information on the legislative intent and how much cost recovery you are trying to target and why.

Richard Young: Could you outline the process you go through to make decisions on things.

Joni Packard: We will have some proposals in February.

Pat Flowers: The other thing is if you've done any work on how fees affect participation? What your demand curve looks like.

Joni: Forest Service information may be sketchy on that.

Nancy Anderson: We have sites where we've done customer surveys; one of the questions is related to fees.

Ben Deeble: One topic that came up was the utility corridors that are being planned across the state. It would be nice to hear more about that.

Marilyn thanked everyone for coming and for their participation.

The meeting was adjourned.

/s/ Dan Lucas

Dan Lucas, RAC Chairperson