

EASTERN MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
Billings, Montana
November 20, 2002

Attendance

RAC: Marian Hanson, Harold Cottet, Betty Aye, Jamie Byrne, Becky Kallevig,
Neta Old Elk, Jack Bailey, Dave Smith, Eldon Rice
Absent: John Ensign, Bucky Herringer, Bill Kennedy, Bill Schwarzkoph, Marty Ulrich,
Robert Lubbers (PHX)

BLM: David McInay, David Jaynes, Scott Haight, Linda Reder, Mark Jacobsen, Sharon
Ross

Welcome/Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone and the group reviewed the ground rules and the agenda.
Linda introduced the four new RAC members (Marian Hanson, Jamie Byrne, Jack Bailey, and Betty Aye).

Field Manager Updates

David Jaynes, BiFO - Pompeys Pillar - 50 percent of the design work is done on the Pillar Interpretive Center. Building construction should begin by the spring of 2004.

Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range - To keep the horse numbers down, there will be a small roundup (approximately 25 head) next summer.

Shepherd Ah-Nei Recreation Area - Brian Biggs, a nearby landowner, filed a lawsuit on September 11 stating that BLM is mismanaging the area. The lawsuit is still in litigation.

Land Exchanges - Currently working on a trade with the National Park Service on land near the Big Hole Battlefield. Also working on a 20-acre exchange in the Sundance Lodge Recreation Area. We hope to have this done by the fall of 2003.

We are also looking into a land exchange by Steamboat Butte, north of Pompeys Pillar. Concerns have been identified on archaeology sites and prairie dogs.

Dave McInay, MCFO - On January 13, 2003, David Jaynes will be transferring to the Miles City Field Office as Associate Field Manager. Marty Ott (from Zion National Park in Utah) will be Montana's new State Director. He will be on board in January of 2003.

The Final Coal Bed Methane EIS will be printed and sent out to the public in January for a 30-day comment period.

Public recreation access to public lands (hunting) is a big issue for Miles City right now.

Grazing - The drought has affected a lot of people in the area.

Fire - Fortunately Miles City did not have a lot of big project fires this past season. The prescribed fire

program is being reviewed. We were able to complete some prescribed burns this fall that we were unable to complete last spring.

Weatherman Draw ACEC Update

Clayton McCracken of the Sierra Club (Yellowstone Basin Group) spoke at the last RAC meeting. Now that the oil and gas leases are cancelled, he is concerned about the protection of the site. There is limited public access to the area and motorcycles or motorized vehicles are not allowed in the area. It is walk-in only. A subcommittee was formed to work on the management of this site. There are many issues the subcommittee needs to work through (i.e., do we work with other groups? where do we go now?). The group has established some goals and took a tour of the area in December.

Funding will be a big issue. A lot of outreach will need to be done. Becky Kallevig is trying to contact Larry Loendorf, an archaeologist familiar with this area, to give a presentation to the RAC.

Members of the Subcommittee are: Mark Jacobsen, David Jaynes, Bill Milton, Neta Old Elk, Harold Cottet, Becky Kallevig, and Robert Lubbers.

National RAC Broadcast

The RAC members watched the National RAC Broadcast, which was an interactive video session (push-to-talk). The meeting was held in Phoenix, Arizona, and Robert Lubbers and Bill Milton attended the two-day meeting.

RAC members would like Robert Lubbers to write-up his experiences at the National RAC meeting.

It was decided that the RAC members would like to bring in non-RAC members, as needed, to be on subcommittees.

Sage Grouse Update (Roxanne Falise)

An MOU was signed in 2000 to work on sage grouse conservation strategies across jurisdictional boundaries. Montana has been developing a framework plan to develop a toolbox of ideas of various ways to maintain sage grouse and grouse habitat. The draft plan is ready for public review and a number of public meetings will be held. There will be a 60-day comment period. A copy of the plan will be mailed to the RAC members. The plan can also be found on the Fish, Wildlife and Parks website. RAC comments are welcome and the deadline for submission of comments will be the end of January. Individual comments can be sent to Jack Bailey and Dave Smith and they will collect the comments and forward them on or they can be emailed to Roxanne Falise (rfalise@mt.blm.gov) at the Montana State Office.

Prairie Dog Update (Roxanne Falise/Larry Rau)

A statewide prairie dog plan was signed in September 2002. Several months ago the Wildlife Federation nominated all prairie dog towns and black-tailed prairie dog habitat as an ACEC (area of critical environmental concern) range-wide across the state. BLM has a responsibility to evaluate the nomination petition. There have been numerous meetings and discussions, but at this time BLM is still undecided how to handle the issue. This issue has also been a big concern for interest groups. The latest from our Washington Office is that they will assume the lead for the evaluation and would be focusing on the special management needs for the prairie dogs. BLM does need to address the issue and do some type of

evaluation and determination on it. There will be local review (state and field offices) on any type of evaluation, and a public process will be involved.

Oil and Gas EIS Update (Scott Haight)

The draft EIS went out last February for 90-day public comment period. We presently have a preliminary final EIS out for internal review. We hope to have all the review comments in by the first week of December and then we can start putting together the final EIS and send it to print. If everything goes as planned in the review and a supplement is not needed, the final EIS will be sent to the printer in early or mid-January. After the EIS goes out, there will be a 30-day protest period. After any protests are resolved, a record of decision will be issued.

We currently have efforts underway to put in some monitoring wells in the coal-bed emphasis area. We have 16 wells installed already in 9 locations, which was done cooperatively by the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. USGS already has some programs going to install monitoring wells on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservation areas.

Feedback on RAC Meeting

Linda said that the past format for the RAC meetings is one full-day meeting with a social scheduled the evening before. The majority of the time, a field trip is also scheduled. The meetings are also spread around the state, which gives people that normally can't travel an opportunity to go to the RAC meeting. If anyone would like a format change, just let Linda or Mark know.

Upcoming Agenda Items

- Coal-bed methane
- How the Knowlton travel management process worked through the hunting season
- Weatherman Draw
- OHV
- Briefing on protocol/decision making process that a BLM Fire Management Officer goes through when we have a fire, and what a fire manager's responsibilities are in Montana.
- Prescribed Fire field trip
- Powder River depot

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Thursday, March 6, 2003, in Miles City, with an evening social on Wednesday, March 5.

EASTERN MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
Red Lodge, Montana
September 19, 2002

Attendance

RAC: Bill Kennedy, Dave Smith, Becky Kallevig, Neta Old Elk, Bill Milton, Robert Lubbers, Harold Cottet, Marty Ulrich, Art Hayes, John Ensign, Don Allen

Absent: Don Woerner, Bucky Herringer, Bill Schwarzkoph, Eldon Rice

BLM: Dave McIlInay, Sandy Brooks, David Jaynes, Sharon Ross, Todd Yeager, Larry Padden, Linda Birtles, Linda Reder

Public: Clayton McCracken (Sierra Club, Yellowstone Basin Group)

Welcome/Introductions

- Linda welcomed everyone and the group reviewed the ground rules and the agenda. Linda collected the RAC surveys - please mail them to her if you have not handed them in yet. The RAC terms for Bill Milton and Don Allen have expired. Dave McIlInay presented them with a token of appreciation and thanked them for their commitment and hard work.

Field Manager Updates

- Sandy Brooks, BiFO - Immunocontraception has been implemented in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range this summer. It was appealed by the Fund for Animals approximately 6 weeks ago. The appeal was withdrawn so the vaccinations went ahead as scheduled. Dr. Jay Kirkpatrick of Zoo Montana did the darting. Thirteen horses (1 and 2 year olds) received primers and booster shots.

Media Day at the Pryors was held on September 12, and there was a good turnout. Everyone involved had an opportunity to see the darting process in action and the low impact it had on the horses. Next summer we will try to roundup 15 bachelors and hire a local helicopter service to bring them down the mountain. We have requested \$30,000 for this roundup and are not sure if we will receive the funding.

There was a 7,000-acre fire in the Pryor Mountains this summer (mostly Forest Service land, with some BLM land). Rehab efforts have already started, and a lot of roadwork has been completed. A Type II Incident Command team was called in for 2 weeks. It was an excellent team and they worked well with the community.

We are in the process of rehabilitating Penn's Cabin. The cabin was built in the 1920's and is a popular cabin for campers to stay overnight. Volunteers have taken the chinking out of the cabin, and restoration specialists begin work on the

cabin this fall.

Shepherd Ah-Nei is an off-highway vehicle use area that has been in existence since the 1970's. It is located northeast of Billings and is heavily used by Billings folks, motorcycle clubs, and ATV users. The area has been designated as an off-highway vehicle use area since 1984 when the land use plan was finalized. The area has been built up quite a bit since then, and we have heard concerns from the landowners and neighbors regarding the property. The closest neighbor is about ½ mile from the boundary of BLM land, and he has been the most vocal in complaining about the use of the area.

We have met with him, the motorcycle club, and users out on-the-ground and established hours of use from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. We have also been patrolling the area with our law enforcement ranger and the county sheriff. Some of his concerns are the noise, dust, people racing up and down the county road, and no toilet in the area. We did get funding for a toilet, and over the last few years we have put in a firebreak and completed a fuels reduction project. We have also talked to the landowner about things he could do to reduce the fire danger around his home and property. He filed a lawsuit on September 11 stating that we are mismanaging the area and that we need to go through the NEPA process again and make sure we are in the boundaries of our land use plan. In the meantime, he asks that we shut the area down; and if we can't meet NEPA requirements, we need to rehab the area.

Pompeys Pillar - Visitation is up by 12 percent with 50,000 visitors. The size of the Interpretive Center has been reduced due to concerns regarding the matched funds coming from the Pompeys Pillar Historical Association - it is now a 5,600 square foot building. The conceptual design is completed, the design will be completed in February, and then we will be moving forward with the construction documents. The bidding is planned for next July and construction will start after the first of the year in January 2004 with completion in April 2005. We should have one full season of use before the 200-year Bicentennial of Clark signing his name on the rock.

The Pompeys Pillar Historical Association has signed on with the Montana Lewis and Clark statewide fundraising effort. They have hired a professional fundraiser and should be able to raise \$2 million dollars with their fundraising efforts. If the association could not come up with matching funds, BLM would still be able to complete a building with interpretative facilities. The \$2 million that the Association raises will go for interpretive exhibits, the gallery, etc. The appropriated money will go towards the building, roads, etc.

The grain elevators near the Pillar are on their way up. They are working 24 hours a day and the elevators should be up and completed in a week. The new interchange will be going up and should be completed in 2005.

Dave McIlInay, MCFO - Just about to reach his first year anniversary as Field Manager in Miles City. The big project for Miles City is coal-bed methane. Fred O'Ferrall and Mary Bloom will give a briefing later this morning. The selection for Marilyn Krause, Public Affairs Officer, has been made. Mark Jacobsen will be on board in early November. We are starting to interview for the Associate Field Manager position in Miles City and Lewistown this week.

Fire - Miles City had approximately 150 fires this summer ranging in size from 1/10 of an acre to 10,000 acres involving both BLM and state lands. There is some rehab work that needs to be done.

Grazing - Staff is working on grazing allotments Standards and Guidelines (approximately 25). The reports are being finalized.

Weeds - County cooperative agreements are in place, and weeds have been sprayed this summer. Because of the heavy fire season, the helicopter/manager was not available for weed efforts this year. The money was obligated for use of a helicopter service next year.

National RAC Meeting

The National RAC meeting will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, on November 19. There will be an interactive video session (push-to-talk) on November 20. We will hold a meeting in Billings for this session. The broadcast will include a summary of lessons learned in the past 6 years, a blueprint for the future, and future goals and expectations.

Public Comment Period: Clayton McCracken - Sierra Club (Yellowstone Basin Group)

The Sierra Club, in coalition with the Indian tribes, do not want any drilling for oil on Weatherman Draw. Anshutz Co. gave the leases to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Trust is now turning the leases back to BLM with the understanding that there will be no oil leases in the area until the management plan is revised. Native Americans hold this area sacred, and the Sierra Club will continue advocacy of the area. In part due to the attention this area has received, it's now seeing increased vandalism and motorcycle use and Clayton suggested that more patrols of the area would help decrease the abuse. The patrols would create a presence, educate the people, and violations in the area would be reported. The volunteer patrol program has been very effective for BLM, but the program has been cut back due to funding. This program has shown to be extremely cost-effective for BLM. The Sierra Club would also like to see no firearms and no hunting (except for bow-hunting) in the area.

The RAC formed a subcommittee to address management of this area.

Update on Oil and Gas EIS - Fred O'Ferrall and Mary Bloom

Still preparing the preliminary final EIS. It will probably be late January before the project will be complete. There was a technical error in air modeling which set everything back - the water modeling is completed. The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has submitted a mitigation package.

The BLM has attempted to make the final document more "reader friendly" and easier to understand than the draft. BLM is also preparing a stand-alone summary of the final EIS. Cards went out last week to everyone on the mailing list asking if they would like a summary or a hard copy. The current mailing list is over 10,000 names.

Water Monitoring - Contract with the Montana Board of MBMG (Montana Bureau of Mining Geology). There are approximately 16-18 wells that need to be drilled. The final report should be out in late December or early January.

Monitoring - Bill Milton

Bill met with BLM staff to get a better understanding on how to make monitoring more useful - asking them why are we monitoring and are we meeting our objectives? One of the reasons that monitoring is done is to test if your plan is successful or not. BLM is concerned on how to apply monitoring in a consistent way with a variety of different situations. Is it giving us the information that we need or can it demonstrate that we are meeting standards and guidelines? For RAC discussion purposes, Bill also come up with a set of draft criteria on what a monitoring strategy might need.

Larry Padden and Todd Yeager led the RAC members on a tour and showed everyone the process that BLM uses in determining the health of the land and whether a permittee is meeting standards and guidelines. It was also an opportunity for RAC members to ask questions and learn whether this process is meeting our needs.

Meeting Evaluation/Wrap-Up

The next meeting will be November 20 in Billings at the BLM State Office. There will be a social the evening of November 19.

EASTERN MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
Miles City, MT
May 9, 2002

Attendance

RAC: Harold Cottet, Marty Ulrich, Becky Kallevig, Robert Lubbers, Don Allen, Art Hayes, Bill Schwarzkoph, Don Woerner, Eldon Rice, John Ensign, Bucky Herringer

BLM: Sandy Brooks, Dave McIlroy, Linda Reder, Sheila McNee, David Jaynes, David Squires, Kent Undlin, Dale Tribby

Public: Roger Muggli, Miles City, Rex Mongold, Miles City

Field Manager Updates

Sandy, BiFO - Pryor Wild Horse Herd - We are proposing to address the unhealthy impacts on young mares that foal by applying fertility control. This will help achieve and maintain a healthy and genetically viable Pryor Mountain wild horse population. We are recommending that all 15 yearling and 7 two-year old mares within the herd receive a primer and booster dose of immunocontraceptive Porcine Zona Pellucida (PZP) vaccine. The vaccine would make the mares infertile for one year, allowing them to mature in a healthier condition, before becoming pregnant.

We have held two adoptions this year with some success. One more is planned July 12-13 in Grand Forks, ND.

Weatherman Draw – Anschutz has relinquished their lease to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which intends to let the lease expire. The Native American Tribes involved in this issue have expressed concerns with the increase in public awareness of this area as a result of the press and have requested more monitoring. BiFO has only one Ranger for the Field Office, but a Citizens Watch Group helps in monitoring.

Fire – We were able to complete several prescribed burns this spring and have already had a few wildfires.

Sherry Barnett of the WO is our Acting SD director for at least 60 days. The State Director vacancy announcement is out.

The Central MT RAC sent letter to the MT Congressional Delegation requesting funding for Upper Missouri National Monument.

Dave, MCFO – Aden has taken a Field Manager position in Richfield, UT. We are completing the interviews for the Public Affairs position and hope to have this filled

this summer.

We were able to complete some prescribed burns before green up, but weather hampered our efforts. Because our current Land Use Plan severely limits prescribed burning, we will be completing an amendment.

The protests on the OHV EIS remain unresolved.

Update on Sage Grouse Technical Committee and Prairie Dogs

We expect to have an internal draft plan out for review by the end of June. We will send copies to the RAC. The intent of the plan is for it to be utilized as an umbrella guidance document for the management of sage grouse and sage grouse habitat.

In concert with the FWP, we have completed a number of winter and spring surveys that encompass about one half of Region 7. It will take about 4-5 years to survey the entire region. Although the best available information suggests sage grouse populations have declined in MT and other states, generally speaking, sage grouse currently are in good shape.

The State Prairie Dog Plan was finalized in January. The main thrust of the plan is to manage and maintain 125,000 acres of prairie dog towns. Recent surveys show currently there are 90,000 acres of towns, however some acres haven't been surveyed. We have contracted for additional surveys this summer.

The status of the prairie dog has been changed from a pest to a non-game species, and from March 1 to May 31 shooting of prairie dogs on public lands (Federal) is prohibited. A shooting closure is in effect year long on Black-Footed Ferret sites (Phillips County).

Rangeland Monitoring

We held a 3-day monitoring workshop in May. Traditionally, allotments with plans (AMPs) were our priority allotments for monitoring. In completing our allotment assessments for rangeland health our decisions are based on monitoring indicators.

Discussion centered around the need to have a defensible system(s), standardization, costs, exclosures, and the need to have a vision for the future. BLM will report further on monitoring and the outcome of the workshop at the next RAC meeting. The RAC also requested a field trip to demonstrate monitoring techniques at the next meeting.

Permittees recently received a letter asking their support of AUM buy-outs. This letter has gone to permittees around the country and we've been fielding a lot of

questions.

Update on Oil and Gas EIS

The public comment period on the Draft EIS closed May 15. We received ~8000 comments. A large portion of the comments were simply stating support or non-support of the document. The next most recurrent comments were related to water. Many comments also indicated a need to better clarify the preferred alternative.

Becky asked BLM to add a section on ranching culture like the discussion on different tribes.

For clarification, the purpose of the EIS is to analyze impacts of development. The EIS is not an authorizing document but rather will provide ways to mitigate potential impacts. After the EIS is completed, NEPA will then be required on site specific APD's providing another opportunity for public involvement.

Attendance at National RAC meeting

Discussion postponed until next meeting.

Public Comment Period

Roger Muggli presented aerial photos of CBM development in Wyoming.

Public Access Strategy

David Squires provided an update on Distribution of Hunting Opportunities project. This is a cooperative effort among BLM, MT FW&P, and DNRC to analyze public access opportunities, particularly hunting.

Update on Pompeys Pillar

Sandy provided an update and the latest renderings of the Pompeys Pillar Interpretive Center.

Meeting Evaluation/Wrap-up

The next meeting is scheduled for September 19 in Red Lodge with a social the evening before.

Next Meeting Agenda Items:

- Presentation/Field Trip – Healthy Land Monitoring; Possible development of subcommittee
- Representation at the National RAC meeting, scheduled for 10/26-27 in

Phoenix

Access/Outfitters and Guide Update

Oil and Gas EIS Update