



MONTANA/DAKOTAS BLM

Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES: Billings, Montana: February 23, 2007

RAC Attendees: Jack Bailey, Howard Boggess, Colby Branch, Marian Hanson, Chuck Hauptman, Darryl Olson, Kayhan Ostovar, Larry Pilster, Gerald Reichert, Ray Trumpower and Kent Williams

Staff in Attendance: Jim Albano, Sandy Brooks, Mark Jacobsen

Not in Attendance: Betty Aye, Mack Cole, John Gibson

Public in Attendance: Wes Dingham, Virginia Ball, Ron Nusbaum, Larry Whitney

Billings Field Office Update (Sandy Brooks):

- The RMP revision will start in 2008. Currently, we are working on the preplan and determining where data gaps exist.
- The Wild Horse and Burro position is still not filled. We hope to have it filled by summer.
- Still working on a land exchange with the Billings Motorcycle Club.
- Shepherd Ah-Nei lawsuit is still pending, but the area is operating and open for use.
- We are starting travel management planning work on Acton and Horsethief. BLM, along with the Forest Service, will also work on the Pryors.
- The Bull Mountain Mines is talking about expanding their federal coal operations near Roundup. There is interest in the Carpenter area about possibly starting underground mining.
- Our new archaeologist, Carolyn Sherve-Bybee, will continue the Weatherman Draw Field School this summer with Western Wyoming College.
- We have received funding to study the Lost Canyon Cave this year.
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation will be planting shrubs in the Bundy Fire area.
- Letters have been sent to permittees in the Turkey, Bundy and Derby Fire areas asking that they take a grazing deferment for a year due to the fire.

- Wind Energy Met Tower (located at Bowler Flats near Bridger) has had their permit renewed to continue monitoring. There may be some development in the next couple of years.
- The Interpretative Center at Pompeys Pillar National Monument is finished. They are working on the road and amphitheatre this year. This spring the fees will increase to \$7.
- 17-Mile Shooting Area is open and being monitored very closely by the BLM Ranger and volunteers.

Miles City Field Office Update (Jim Albano):

- Dave McIlroy retired at the end of January 2007.
- New Field Manager will be Elaine Raper. Her report date will be March 26, 2007.
- The Associate Field Manager position will be advertised.
- Miles City, one of seven pilot offices (Energy Policy Act), is continuing to recruit positions. Miles City is also working with the State Historic Preservation Office to issue a contract to digitize cultural resource data for counties in Eastern Montana.
- This is the third year of baseline aquatic system monitoring.
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks are also working to have pilot office positions in Miles City.
- New building is almost complete. We hope to be in the building by the third week in March.
- There will be a Sage-Grouse Workshop to look at the issues and find solutions to minimize the impacts on sage-grouse. The meeting will tentatively be held in Casper, Wyoming, the end of April.

SEIS Update (Mary Bloom):

SEIS was released. We are in the 90-day public comment period, which is from February 2 through May 2. The final will be released in August and the ROD in October 2007.

Public meetings have been scheduled on March 26 (Broadus), March 27 (Billings), March 28 (Hardin), March 29 (Lame Deer), and March 30 (Miles City). The meetings will be an informational exchange in addition to receiving written or oral comments. A court reporter will be recording the comments. Anyone needing additional history on the SEIS should contact Mary Bloom in Miles City.

RMP Update (Mary Bloom):

The Field Manager guides the RMP process. Since there is a change in management, input from the new Field Manager is needed to see if programmatic is still the way to go. The RMP will come out in March or April of this year. There will be more information coming out as Mary talks with the new Field Manager.

RAC members would like an update on ACEC nominations for the next meeting.

RX Fire Presentation (Scott McAvoy):

Miles City has contracted with EMI (Ecosystem Management) for an EA in the Missouri Breaks area. The area is 356,000 acres of BLM-land located in Garfield County. There has been 6 prescribed burns (1998-2003) and two wildfires (2003 and 2006) in the area. A study has been funded by Rocky Mountain Research Station to validate their effects. The study will focus on protecting communities-at-risk, additional mechanical treatment methods, restoring fire to the ecosystem, and reducing fire suppression costs. Fire salvage will also be addressed. Two public meetings were held in January of this year and EMI will gather environmental data this summer. The EA will be ready for comment in April 2008.

Scott also explained the differences between Type 1, 2, and 3 fire teams and briefly talked about liability issues for government fire employees.

Bundy/Derby Fuels/Forest (Bob Meidinger):

Bob discussed the salvage and restoration efforts of the Derby and Bundy Wildland Fires of 2006. The evaluation criteria used to prioritize treatment areas included the immediate need for stabilization, accessibility, timber type/value, range, riparian, and invasive species. The concerns included insects and disease, wildlife, soil erosion and loss, hydrophobic soils, reforestation, and future fuels loading. Treatment objectives included the BAER Team issues of rehab of the fire line and critical environmental concerns as well as managing the remaining forest, protecting soils, and reducing fuel loading.

Tree mortality in the Bundy Railroad fire was at 90 percent plus. The plan for Bundy is to remove fuels (salvage merchantable timber), leave small branches for soil stability, utilize contour felling on steep slopes, plant native grasses/forbs, and plant native shrubs. There will be a re-seeding project in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation on March 24, which will include re-seeding 100 acres of native grasses and forbs and 400 native shrubs.

Tree mortality in the Derby Fire was at 95 percent plus. The Four Creek Stewardship Project was designed in consultation with the BLM, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, DNRC, Sweetgrass County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and Four Creek Ranch. The Four Creek Ranch is in charge of the stewardship contract which is treating 640 acres of BLM land and 9,360 acres of state and private lands. The project objectives are to reduce fuel loading by removal of merchantable salvage timber, pulp, and biomass; stabilize slopes with contour felling; create microclimates; seed native grasses and forbs; and streambed stabilization (culvert installation).

The fire program is also working on NEPA, partnerships, timber value/volume data, project layout, budget, and stewardship on similar projects including Susie Creek, Bridger Creek, and Bad Canyon.

Public Comment Period:

Ron Nusbaum, from the Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen, wanted to share his thoughts on the Derby fire. He wanted to know what can be done to help in fighting

wildfires; i.e., a better scale of response, being more proactive, a need for better tools or technology, such as satellite mapping programs, to be more aggressive in reducing the catastrophe caused by wildfires.

It was suggested that a good opportunity for public commenting on the fire program is to be present at the year-end fire briefings that are held yearly in the off-season.

Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen Presentation on the Lily Pad Lake Trail Project (Ron Nusbaum):

The Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen would like to thank Montana BLM for their help in completing the federally-certified survey and boundary marking of the Lily Pad Lake area last summer.

The Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen are proposing a non-motorized road to give the public access to Lily Pad Lake and Crater Lake. This road would also reduce the pressure on the Mystic Lake trail. In addition, they would also like to construct a parking area at the trailhead. The parking area seems to be a big stumbling block and everyone would need to work together to make it happen. The parking lot would provide “day-use” parking for cars, trucks and horse trailers. There has been some concern from nearby neighbors/landowners concerning the impacts and development of the area; but Montana State Parks are very interested in the project and the Backcountry Horsemen have received a lot of positive feedback concerning the project.

Sandy Brooks expressed some concern on the impact of the parking lot and asked if there was any interest from the state to fund a parking lot that isn't on state land. She also expressed the possibility of waiting to see how the trail developed naturally in the next year before going ahead with the development of a trailhead and trail.

The group didn't want the RAC to make a decision on the area now; but would like the RAC members to come down and see the area for themselves so that they can make an informed decision. The horsemen are planning to host an event on May 5-6 at Lily Lake. Please RSVP to Ron Nusbaum by May 1.

The Backcountry Horseman would also like the RAC to put together a cover letter, with signatures, endorsing and thanking everyone for their involvement in the project. The group concurred and Howard Boggess took the lead on drafting the letter. The letter will be emailed to everyone for their input and as many signatures as possible will be collected at the May 5-6 event at Lily Lake.

Council Discussion/Working Session:

- Field trip, May 5-6, 2007, at Lily Lake. Please RSVP to Ron Nusbaum by May 1.
- Next RAC meeting and field trip will be held on May 30-31, 2007. May 30 will be the field trip to Pumpkin Creek, Rattlesnake Butte, and Snow Creek. The meeting is scheduled for May 31.
- For those interested, Mark will try to set up a field trip on the prescribed burn at the Wildhorse/Horsethief areas on dates yet to be determined.

- RAC members said they found it helpful when BLM specialists inform them on specific topics. They suggested an update on aquatics, travel management, and ACEC's in the future. They also requested an update on the Spring Creek Coal Mine decision.
- Reminder; the BLM is looking for E MT RAC nominations. Contact Mark Jacobsen if you know of anyone that would be interested.

Next Meeting Dates:

- Field Trip (Pumpkin Creek, Rattlesnake Butte, and Snow Creek) is scheduled for May 30.
- RAC Meeting will be held on May 31, 2007 with a field trip to Pumpkin Creek in the afternoon.



MONTANA/DAKOTAS BLM

Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES: Miles City, Montana: May 31, 2007

RAC attendees: Kent Williams, Gerald Reichert, Ray Trumpower, Larry Pilster, Jack Bailey, Howard Boggess, Betty Aye, Chuck Hauptman, Darryl Olson

RAC members not in attendance: Colby Branch, Kayhan Ostovar, Mack Cole, Marian Hanson

Staff in attendance: Jim Sparks, Elaine Raper, Mark Jacobsen, Fred Wambolt, Dale Tribby, Pam Wall, Donna Bradley, Lori Harbaugh, Larry Rau

Public in attendance: Ken Nemitz, Joe Nemitz

Housekeeping/opening business (Mark Jacobsen):

Housekeeping items were addressed. A previous request from the Forest Service --to schedule meetings one year in advance—was presented for the RAC's consideration.

Traditionally, meetings have generally been held in September, November, February and May with subcommittees meeting on the side as necessary. Mack and Colby had expressed support for this proposal in separate correspondence prior to the meeting.

The RAC was asked to consider the proposal during the day and the concept would be revisited at the meeting's end.

Larry suggested the next meeting be held at Alzada and include a tour of reclamation sites at the local bentonite mine.

Billings Field Office Update (Jim Sparks):

- The RMP revision will begin in 2008. Currently completing pre-plan work.

- New Wild Horse and Burro Specialist is Jared Bybee. He is reviewing, and evaluating the herd management plan for the Pryors. He is cooperating with partner agencies and will be working with interested groups. The present stocking rate appears to be appropriate for the herd management area.
- The Billings Motorcycle Club proposed a land exchange involving Shepherd Ah Nei. The proposal has been sent to Washington, D.C. and will proceed if approval is received.
- Depending on weather, Shepherd Ah Nei OHV area remains open. The fee collection proposal is awaiting action in Washington D. C. It may be a few more months before this will be published in the Federal Register. We will be required to wait 6 months after publication in the Federal Register before fees can be charged.
- Compliance at Shepherd Ah Nei is requiring much of Recreation and Law Enforcement staff time. A seasonal employee could be hired using the proposed fees. Additional work on the parking area this year and new gates have been installed. The Montana Conservation Corp will be completing rehabilitation projects this year.
- Pompeys Pillar landscaping, parking, roads and fee station will be completed.
- Only six grazing permit renewals needed to be processed this year. All are done.
- Three travel management plans are being developed. Acton, north of Billings is ready to be implemented. Horsethief is being finalized. BLM and USFS are cooperating on a plan for the Pryors, but the management processes will be separate.
- Extra funds received for Salt Cedar control. The counties will monitor and treat weeds in the Derby/Bundy Fire sites.
- The contract for the Crooked Creek Fish Barrier is ready to go. FWP, FS and BLM are cooperating on this project.
- Closed 17-Mile to facilitate an area cleanup. User groups participated, resulting in improved litter control.
- Timber Salvage work is in progress on the Derby fire. The tree thinning contract is in progress for the Horsethief project. Bundy fire rehabilitation projects are ongoing.

Miles City Field Office Update (Elaine Raper):

- Elaine reviewed her bio for RAC members.
- Public comment period for the draft SEIS has closed; received 30,000 comments. Will open a comment period regarding Air Quality concerns. Final document may be complete by end of the year.
- RMP revision is back on schedule. Developing alternatives from previous scoping meeting comments.

- ACEC designated sites will be reviewed to determine if they still meet qualifications. Six sites have been nominated for consideration. The public may request additional sites.

Staffing:

- Position announcement is out for the Associate Field Manager.
- Fred Wambolt Supervisory, Non-Renewable Resources will retire 7/1/07.
- Larry Apple, Wildlife Biologist retired 5/1.
- Archaeologist position announcement closed and interviews are being conducted.
- Erin Fryer, Rangeland Management Specialist, moved back to the USFS. Seeking PMC approval to fill the position.
- Brian Lynnes, Outdoor Recreation Planner retired.
- Energy Pilot office continues to pursue staffing to manage workload. The BLM provided funds for MT FWP to fill positions to cover wildlife concerns.
- The SMT committee is reviewing a National proposal to study the feasibility and process of changing to a three-tier structure.
- The Fire Readiness Review is June 4-6, 2007. The Fire program continues to build up local cooperation.
- Spring Creek Coal lease has sold. Buffers have been set for nesting and pictograph sites.
- Fred and Pam informed members on the status of the Pumpkin Creek land exchange. Phase 1 includes Custer county acreage and Phase 2 will use additional federal acres in Carter County. The FO is beginning the process to draft a management plan.

Public Comment Period (Ken Nemitz):

Mr. Nemitz requested to be heard regarding the Short Pine OHV Recreation Area. The public land is a checkerboard pattern within his private land and OHV users are not respecting private property and the damage to private and public land is decreasing the value of his ranch.

He cited several examples of OHV users trespassing on his land and stated that the land was very rough and that fencing wasn't a workable solution. He also said that violators were impossible to identify and that law enforcement efforts weren't working.

He expressed interest in purchasing a section of land and trading it to the BLM for OHV use. Ken requested RAC assistance in decreasing the degradation, passed around photos of OHV damage to pasture and hillsides and invited members to tour his ranch.

Council Discussion/Working Session:

- Members discussed compliance and enforcement issues regarding use of public land. Topics covered were the time and cost of employees, pros and cons of closing areas, ownership versus public use rights and the role the RAC has in mitigating these concerns.
- Kent made a motion with Darryl and Gerald seconding, to draft a resolution letter suggesting that DOI increase the priority for enforcement of land use management and care. May include additional funds for law enforcement, maintenance of facilities and signing or fencing as deemed beneficial.
 - Members in attendance unanimously supported the proposal; a full quorum was not available so members will be contacted individually.
 - Darryl will draft the document and send it to Mark for distribution to the rest of the RAC for input into the draft. After the rest of the RAC has made their respective input and comments, and has unanimously endorsed the letter, the final form will be sent to DOI, BiFO, MSO and MCFO. Copies will be sent to the other Montana/Dakotas RAC chairpersons to be considered for a statewide proposal at the next statewide RAC meeting which should be announced in the future.
- Darryl requested the RAC be notified of road easement requests. Fred and Jim provided the status of pending requests.
- Howard will coordinate a Lilly pad subcommittee meeting with the Beartooth Back County Horseman. He will request them to have their proposal submitted prior to the field trip. The subcommittee will report at the September RAC meeting.
 - Ray Trumpower joined the Lilly Pad subcommittee. The subcommittee membership is: Howard, Darryl, Gerald and Ray.
- Kent requested a formal presentation on ACECs be included on the September agenda.
- Gerald asked about the Sage Grouse studies done in the CBNG area and their implication on the SEIS. Dale Tribby summarized the studies and said the information --although different-- is similar and is the baseline information for the BLM.
- Darryl requested that the subcommittee reschedule the Rattlesnake Butte Travel Management Area tour.
- A Pumpkin Creek Management subcommittee was formed.
 - Members: Howard, Larry, Darryl, Betty and Marian.
- Fred answered questions, clarified historical issues and provided decision documents and previous BLM correspondence that were originally sent to Ken Nemitz to members regarding the Short Pine OHV site. Fred also detailed the public meetings and their results which directly related to the Short Pine OHV area.
- Lori Harbaugh provided information on law enforcement activities at the Short Pine OHV area.

- A Short Pine OHV Area subcommittee was formed; (this group will also address Pumpkin Creek OHV use at a later time.)
 - Members: Kent, Colby (nominated in absentia, pending acceptance), Darryl, Howard, Betty --and Gerald as chairperson.
 - The first meeting will be July 18-19, location TBD; a tour will be scheduled prior to the meeting.

Pumpkin Creek Land Exchange update and map orientation (Pam Wall, Fred Wambolt):

RAC members received an issue update and map orientation from Pam. Fred answered questions regarding the mechanics of the exchange. Land disposal topics in Custer and Carter counties were addressed.

Pumpkin Creek Land Exchange field trip (Larry Rau, Pam Wall, Fred Wambolt):

RAC members boarded vehicles and were transported to three vantage points where they could get a visual scope of the land exchange area. Larry guided the group and explained some of the features of the landscape that are appealing from a land manager's perspective.

Several management options were discussed at each vantage point, to include what could be considered as 'non-traditional' approaches to 'out-of-the-box' management.

Issues discussed included: travel management, access, riparian restoration and agricultural uses and issues. RAC members contributed their perspectives regarding public and political involvement for the future process.

Weather conditions hampered extensive off-highway travel. The group accessed areas directly from the pavement. Once the tour was completed the group returned to the Miles City Field Office to wrap up the meeting.

Next Meeting Dates:

- The topic of scheduling meetings one year in advance was revisited by the RAC and dates were identified:
 1. September 18-19 (Tu, We):
 - *Larry Pilster volunteered/proposed to host the RAC at Alzada to tour the local bentonite mine operations and possibly the Hay Draw Travel Management Area. Larry will draft a schedule and agenda to be forwarded to the RAC for their approval.*
 2. November 13-14 (Tu, We): Location to be determined
 3. February 6-7 (We, Th): Location to be determined
 4. May 28-29 (We, Th): Location to be determined



MONTANA/DAKOTAS BLM

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RAC MEETING MINUTES:

Alzada, Montana: September 18, 2007

RAC Attendees: Ray Trumpower, Gerald Reichert, Marian Hanson, Larry Pilster, Betty Aye, Howard Boggess, Kent Williams, Jack Bailey

RAC Members not in attendance: Colby Branch, Kayhan Ostovar, Mack Cole, Darryl Olson

BLM Staff in Attendance: Gene Terland, Jim Sparks, Elaine Raper, Todd Yeager, Jody Fossum, Dan Benoit, Dena Lang, Donna Bradley

Public in Attendance: American Colloid Employees

State Director Update (Gene Terland)

Gene reviewed his bio for the RAC members. He expressed his appreciation for member efforts in addressing issues, even when controversial.

- Miles City continues to work on SEIS and the RMP. Billings Field Office will be starting their RMP revision.
- The grazing regulations were not enacted, doesn't anticipate any change until after the 2008 Presidential election.
- He discussed sage grouse and the effect on hunting and BLM programs. There isn't enough historical trend data to have the complete picture of impacts due to West Nile disease, subdivisions, fires and oil and gas and so forth.

Billings Field Office Update (Jim Sparks)

Jim reviewed his bio. He was been selected as the Field Office Manager and is no longer in an acting capacity.

- Construction has begun on the Crooked Creek Fish Passage Barrier. The construction company has been very responsive to working in the sensitive, wilderness study area. They built a trolley system to move in the equipment and materials and the cement is being mixed on site.
- The Weed program received rehab funding for treatments in the Derby fire area. The noxious weed inventory in this area was exacerbated by the fire. This year BLM funding will provide chemicals for Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater and Musselshell counties to dispense to permittees that are licensed applicators. The goal is to be able to access more remote sites and not stop treatment at fence lines.
- Shepherd Ah Nei OHV: The fee system is ready to be implemented, once the comments are reviewed with the RAC. Collections can begin six months after publication in the Federal Register. The funds received will benefit that area. The landowner has withdrawn the appeal regarding site management. The IBLA dismissed the court case.
- 17 Mile Recreation Area: Enforcement patrols are continuing and tickets have been issued for littering. A time management issue for staff, but it's felt that if patrols are decreased the issues will return.
- Pompey's Pillar National Monument: The facility is being kept open for a longer season of use; usage increased from 2006. Jim suggested that the next RAC meeting be held at this facility.
- Wild Horse and Burro: The Herd Management Plan revision is continuing. The recommended herd size remains the same. Planning efforts are being coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service and the Park Service. The two adoptions held this summer were successful.
- Travel management of the three high priority areas continues. The Pryor Mountains area has been deferred so the USFS and BLM can implement the final plan together.
- Received approval to acquire the Meetetse Spires. This is 516 acres between BLM and USFS. The landowner is receptive and negotiations are ongoing for access issues.
- The fire season was relatively light. All resources responded as a group this year, BLM, DNRC, private etc. There will be a timber salvage sale in the Derby/Bundy fire area.
- The RMP will be revised and won't be contracted out. Will begin scoping meetings to determine the areas the public want emphasized.

- The Lilly Pad trail proposal was discussed. The EA will address the cumulative affects as this will open up 30 miles of USFS land that currently isn't accessible.

Miles City Field Office Update (Elaine Raper)

- Pumpkin Creek Land Exchange: The MCFO continues to work through Phase 1 and is currently in the public comment period for the final document.
- National Public Lands Day is September 29. Oil Pump Reservoir –located in Prairie County south of Glendive-- will be fenced and an aerator fisheries windmill will be erected.
- Three Restoration and Recreation projects are being completed:
 - A portion of Howrey Island Nature trail has been completed. This will improve accessibility for the public, including handicapped access.
 - The Cherry Creek Riparian Restoration project has had over 5,000 cuttings planted along 2.5 miles of stream.
 - The North Pine Cedar Creek prescribed burn will increase diversity and open areas in 3000 acres of BLM and private land.
- The draft of the CBNG SEIS was released. Additional air modeling information is available and will be analyzed in a draft air supplemental document. The Record of Decision should be complete by the summer of 2008.
- Lonney Bagley, North Dakota FM requests a joint meeting with the RAC's. This would be an opportunity to identify issues that are common across the boundaries. The statewide RAC meeting is dependant on the FY08 budget.
- The RAC hasn't received a comment from Washington representatives regarding the Enforcement letter, yet.

Public comment period

- Lyndon Bucher, Representative of American Colloid Company informed the RAC that the Mining Act of 1872 is up for revision consideration. He requests that the RAC be familiar with proposed changes.

RAC lunch discussion

- Gerald Reichert presented a report of the field trip to the Glendive Short Pine OHV Area. After touring, the group agreed that overall, the site was being used as intended. Trails are being used and the open area was what would be expected with non-restricted use. Trespass issues should be reported to law enforcement officials. The RAC suggested improved signage for division of public and private land.

RAC on-site reclamation tour

- The RAC toured various sites associated with reclaimed lands, courtesy of American Colloid Corp. and RAC member Larry Pilster: