

***Eastern Montana RAC Meeting Minutes***  
**BLM Montana State Office, Billings**  
**November 18, 2004**

**Members in Attendance:** Dave McIlroy, Eddie Bateson, Betty Aye, Jack Bailey, Howard Boggess, Mack Cole, John Gibson, Marian Hanson, Chuck Hauptman, Robert Lubbers, Neta Old Elk, Larry Pilster, Gerald Reichert, Marty Ulrich, Kent Williams

**Not in Attendance:** Colby Branch

**Introduced New RAC Members:** Larry Pilster, Gerald Reichert, Kent Williams

**Field Manager Updates (Billings Field Office):**

*Grove Creek* – Grove Creek is located south of Belfry near the Wyoming border. Currently there is a right-of-way application to request access across public land to previously subdivided lots. Significant impacts have been identified in the area and the BLM is working with RLF Big Horn properties, the Crow tribe, adjacent landowners and grazing operators to resolve the issues.

*Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Plan Revision* – The BLM, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service are working on a plan revision for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. Some of the issues include a revised management level for the horses, use of fertility control for controlling herd size, possible range expansion, water source development with controlled access, and habitat improvement projects. The BLM is working on a draft Environmental Assessment which will consider managing a herd of horses at a level to maintain genetic viability (140-150 head) on the currently designated wild horse range with possible expansion into lower elevation National Park Service lands.

*Shooting Closure EA* – Thanks to the RAC for serving as a subcommittee. There are three areas closed to target shooting due to safety issues; Acton, 21-Mile, and Shepherd Ah-Nei. An Environmental Assessment is in for review and the Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed 30 days after the public meeting. A copy of the EA has been handed out to the RAC members. A public meeting on this issue will be held on December 8, at 7 p.m. at the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

*T&E Backlog* – The original Billings RMP and Record of Decision was written in 1984. Due to the age of the RMP, changes in actions occurring on public lands, and additions of species listed as T&E, we are required to re-evaluate consultations for T&E species on public lands. The new consultation will address the backlog needed and also be applied to the new RMP Amendment to begin in 2006.

*Prep-Planning Effort for RMP Revision* – The Field Office is working on the preparation plan this year (FY05). The RMP Revision should be finished in 2006, and the ROD will be (tentatively) completed in 2008.

*Interagency Initial Attack* – The Billings Field Office is working on having its own fire interagency initial attack zone to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the fire program. The Field Office is creating an interagency initial attack fire zone which includes the Beartooth Ranger District of the Custer National Forest. The new zone will have a fire management officer and an initial attack dispatch staff as required by the national office to reduce the 4-tier organization to a more efficient 3-tier organization.

*Horsethief* – The first unit (330 acres) has been mechanically treated and the wood product removed for fuelwood. Remaining slash piles will be burned as conditions allow this winter. Unit Two has been prepared and the IDIQ contract and process is ongoing with a tentative start date of January 3 to sever and move the 6” and larger diameter trees to accessible areas. Stewardship contracting will be used to utilize the wood products and pile the remaining slash. Only the mastication treatment remains on the 440 acres.

*Shepherd Ah-Nei* – The last public comment meeting was held on October 26. A 15-day comment period was provided to the public to give them an opportunity to send in additional comments. The comment period ends November 15. We are now in process of alternative development trying to get the plan done.

**Field Manager Updates (Miles City Field Office):**

*Resource Management Plan* – Miles City is in the process of working on the Resource Management Plan. Several weeks ago there was a training exercise in which members of the public were invited to attend the “Principles of Planning Class.” Miles City wants to have a more collaborative process while working on the plan. A contractor has been selected that will do the work for them.

*Coal-Bed Natural Gas* – Processing applications at this point. Miles City is about a week away from letting a company drill north of the Tongue River Reservoir. Eight lawsuits are still pending and they have not coming to a hearing yet. This is a significant workload for BLM. In December we will issue approval to Fidelity for an additional 24 wells, and a package of 200 federal, private, and state wells will also be approved. We have been informed by industry that they anticipate filing an additional 500-550 wells for natural gas development next year.

*Pumpkin Creek Land Exchange* – This involves a ranch that provides public access between the Baker Highway and Tongue River Road. Landowners have been trying to dispose/sell the ranch and there is several sections of BLM land within his private land. We are working on putting together an exchange package to acquire the land.

*Tongue River Railroad (Round 3) EIS* – Comments are due back to the Surface Transportation Board by December 6. Hearings were held in Miles City and Ashland. Several sections of BLM land are involved and BLM will have to issue a right-of-way.

### **Phoenix Meeting Report (Neta Old Elk):**

Neta has printouts of the presentations, but the CD's were not available. There were numerous informational discussions/powerpoint presentations and discussions on the draft handbook. The new handbook had been mailed out, but the Eastern Montana RAC accomplishments had not been included. Questions also arose that she couldn't answer regarding the Eastern Montana RAC and why they didn't have a chair. She explained that each member wanted to have an equal say. The Western Montana RAC had said that they didn't have a point of contact with the Eastern Montana RAC and they had some (mineral development) issues that they had wanted individual RAC input and not involve the BLM. They also said that since there was no specific chair or point of contact, information has not been forwarded regularly to the Eastern MT RAC.

There was a motion to draft a letter stating the Eastern Montana RAC doesn't have a chair and that is the way they are set up. If any other RAC would like to send information to them, channel the information through the RAC Coordinator Mark Jacobsen. If they don't want to go through BLM, they can use the list of RAC members to contact individual members. Thumbs Up. (Unanimous Decision).

Mary Apple will hand out an updated list of RAC members. No other State RAC meetings are scheduled at this time.

### **Public Comment Period:**

Mr. David Karnos was present and brought a topic before the RAC for consideration. He wanted to know the status of the development of the Bear Tooth Valley Ranch (Grove Creek). He brought in a Billings Gazette article from a year ago which states that the BLM placed the land to a Level 5 category which requires a cost recovery EIS prior to BLM issuing a right-of-way application. The status at this time is that BLM is looking at different alternatives and options to either exchange or to get RLF Big Horn Properties out of the commitment for development of significant federal public lands.

He was concerned that a map showing two earmarked places for sale on the web shows a road which in reality is a two-track. He was also concerned how the riverfront will be preserved. The response by Eddie Bateson and Dave McIlroy was that a land exchange has to be in the public interest and a determination will be made through analysis by BLM managers with the public interest served. All decisions are appealable and there will be a public comment period. If the local manager chooses (due to controversy), there should also be a public hearing to address all public issues and concerns. Mr. Karnos would also like better posting of information to the public on meetings for this issue.

### **Access Subcommittee Report (John Gibson):**

Things are changing rapidly and the whole concept of access and landownership is changing. A lot of money is now involved in access issues. To deal with access problems the committee needs specifics: where it is, who closed it, why it was closed, and the history of the road. They also feel BLM needs to make a concerted effort to identify access needs. Three handouts were passed out: 1) an important tool in gaining

access to public land and water – which talks about “The Curative Statute” which is being used by the lawyer for the Public Land and Water Access Association to open closed roads that access public land and water; 2) abandonment or vacancy of county roads (Montana Session Laws 1999; Ch. 107, Sec. 3/Sec. 7-14-2615) and; 3) a page from BLM direction regarding access issues.

**Energy Subcommittee Report (Mack Cole):**

The committee would like to receive more information from BLM and other entities so they can inform the public and their respective communities and constituents with a better understanding regarding any energy issues/sources; i.e., wind, oil, power, permitting, and EIS issues - not just coal-bed natural gas. They would like to know what is needed and how development is proceeding with these issues.

**Weatherman Draw Update:**

Looting is still very common in the area due to accessibility, the wealth of cultural resources in the area and the difficulty of controlling access in the area. Surveillance has been set up in some isolated areas where there is indication of digging, but to date no one has been caught. The Citizens Watch Group is patrolling the area regularly and has given the BLM several leads and license plates, but it is very difficult to issue any tickets if they aren't caught directly in the act.

Glade Hadden, the Billings Field Office archeologist, held two schools in the Weatherman area this summer. The schools were very successful. The students were used to locate, document, and record cultural data. The Billings Gazette printed several favorable articles on the work they were doing in the area.

Neta Old Elk would like to withdraw from the Weatherman Draw Sub-Committee. Howard Boggess and Robert Lubbers affirmed their inclusion on the subcommittee.

**RMP Process (Dave McIlroy):**

The BLM's consultant is contacting counties, local government agencies, and other groups to participate and collaborate in the RMP process. Collaborative meetings have been scheduled for the first part of December and a cooperative agency training session will be held at Fort Keogh Visitor Center on December 2nd with the RAC members invited to participate. Scoping meetings are tentatively scheduled for February. The timeline for the RMP Process is 3 years (2007), but it is dependent on budget and public controversy.

**RAC Discussion:**

The RAC discussed the drafting of letters to both Twinkle Thompson and the other Montana RACs concerning the way the Eastern MT RAC operates independently of a chairperson, and that the person at the national meetings is representative of the Eastern Montana RAC. The issue of communication between the Eastern Montana RAC and the other RACs should also be addressed with the first point of contact being Mark Jacobson. He will then let the chairman know which individual RAC member to contact. The group

would also like to be contacted and informed of the deadline to ensure that their accomplishments/successes are submitted to future quarterly meetings.

The next national RAC meeting will probably be held in April or May. The group voted that their representative at the next meeting will be Mack Cole with Robert Lubbers as the alternate.

**Open Discussion:**

- Talk to clarify that each RAC subcommittee needs to report to the whole RAC which would approve their position, before reporting to a higher authority.
- Discussion regarding the need to take a stronger look at the Grove Creek issue due to the significant impacts to the area. Eddie Bateson will give a PowerPoint presentation on this issue to get suggestions/recommendations from the RAC. This will be included on the agenda for the next meeting.
- The RAC would like occasional formal briefings/presentations by BLM staff experts on the Miles City RMP efforts.
- The BLM has a good working relationship and is satisfied with the cooperation with other county, state, local, and federal agencies.
- A discussion was held regarding the possibility of using a different format for RAC meetings or even extending the meeting to an additional day. Some ideas were: 1) to have a general briefing on what each Field Office is working on and expound on one or two high profile or controversial topics to seek the RAC's advice or suggestions; 2) get hot topics the afternoon before the social so they can study the issues and decide which topics to discuss; or 3) use briefing papers to focus more on Field Manager topics and have BLM mark the appropriate issues as "high priority." The discussion that followed was that BLM has the knowledge and should choose which topics are high-priority as the RAC's purpose is to give BLM counsel from the public they are representing. The meeting dates were not extended as time was a consideration for many of the members.
- New Weatherman Draw Subcommittee: Robert Lubbers, Howard Boggess, Jack Bailey. They would like to meet with Glade Hadden, Billings Field Office Archeologist.
- Mary Apple brought up the fact that five new positions will expire soon. Some positions are up for re-nomination or reappointment, but everyone needs to start thinking of names for the upcoming recruiting process.
- The next RAC meeting will be held March 9 (evening social) and March 10 (meeting) in Miles City, Montana.

**EASTERN MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Sidney, Montana**  
**May 6, 2004**

**Attendance**

RAC: Marian Hanson, Jamie Byrne, Jack Bailey, Robert Lubbers, Betty Aye, Marty Ulrich, Mack Cole, Howard Boggess, Neta Old Elk, John Gibson, Charles Hauptman, Dave Smith.

BLM: David McIlroy, Sandy Brooks, Mark Jacobsen, Cody Helm.

***Field Manager Updates:***

**Sandy Brooks, BiFO-**

- We have had preliminary discussions with the subdivision developer in the Grove Creek area concerning a land exchange and/or acquisition of the area with the most critical wildlife and cultural issues. If an exchange is unworkable, they will move forward with an EIS concerning the right-of-ways applied for.
- We have completed 380 acres in the first treatment area at the Horse Thief Fuels Reduction Project. The BLM has a local buyer for the decks and has also started laying out the second treatment area, which will be 300 acres. The BLM has received an award for its efforts from the Secretary of Interior
- Pompey's Pillar had a ground breaking ceremony on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Around 100 people attended. Heavy equipment has been moved out to the Pompey's Pillar site. The project is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2005. Over 2000 school children are scheduled to tour the area this spring and more calls are coming in each day. Clark Days has been scheduled for the last weekend in July (24-25) which includes various activities such as a canoe float, pancake breakfast, bird hikes, camping, music, oral history, etc.
- The NRCS has completed the draft report on the carrying capacity and condition of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. BLM will be scheduling a meeting with USFS and NPS prior to providing the information to the public. There will be no wild horses gathered in the Pryor Mountains this year. The BLM will continue with immuno-contraception this summer.
- The Billings Field Office continues to work on OHV Travel Management Planning. The four areas high priority areas we are concentrating on are Shepherd Ah Nei, Pryor Mountains, Horsethief and Acton. Shepherd Ah Nei has heavy OHV use and BLM was sued by an adjacent private homeowner for

the noise and dust pollution. The outcome of the lawsuit was to temporarily close the Shepherd Ah Nei area. The Shepherd area will be closed to motorized vehicles through the summer, hopefully opening in November, but if not then, opening the following spring. The BLM will prioritize the area for trails and plans to have a scoping meeting June 7, 2004 where they will discuss the issues for the Travel Management Plan.

- The BLM has already entered the fire season. Red flag warnings were being issued in the Billings area around the fourth of May. The Billings Field Office is preparing for an early fire season. The Billings Field Office is also sending out drought letters for all permittees, explaining the possibility of delaying turnout or shortening the season-of-use.

### **David McInay, MCFO-**

- Regarding Coal Bed Natural Gas, the Miles City Field Office (MCFO) has issued an approval on 86 federal wells in the Badger Hills area east of Decker, MT. Powder River Gas has proposed to drill wells for testing only and will be treating the produced water. We don't anticipate production because there is no transportation infrastructure for the gas. The MCFO staff has been working on lawsuits filed by opponents to the development. The lawsuit issues concern wildlife, water, West Nile Virus and cultural resources.
- The MCFO received two new applications from Fidelity Corporation. One for 26 federal wells within the Dry Creek area. Fidelity also provided an application on the Coal Creek Project. Fidelity has applied for 139 federal wells and up to 200 plus (with state and private land owners) in the Coal Creek area. Fidelity proposed a process called "managed irrigation". More information will be forthcoming.
- The pilot effort continues with the Hanging Women Creek working group. Meetings with interested and involved parties have been productive and progress is being made. RAC member Jack Bailey is part of the group and has been closely involved in the project.
- The MCFO will be looking for additional public opinion concerning the upcoming Resource Management Plan formulation.
- MCFO forester has started moving 1,300 acres for timber salvage. This is the first major timber sale for the MCFO. The timber salvage operations are due to fires last summer. The Missouri Breaks fire timber has been looked at for possible sale.
- MCFO range management staff has also issued approximately 60 miles of fencing supplies to ranchers that burned out last year under the Missouri Break Complex fires. Vegetation will be monitored in the burned area throughout the growing season and evaluated accordingly.

- Just a little reminder that the Public Lands Day is coming up. It will be held in Glendive, on May 22, 2004. The MCFO is encouraging everybody to join in and have a fun day cleaning up America.

### **Phoenix RAC Chairperson meeting discussion**

The RAC identified questions and concerns regarding the upcoming meeting in Phoenix.

Topics/issues discussed for presentation at the RAC Chair Meeting:

1. Address the issues on the grazing leases.
2. SWL and Why?
3. Grazing EIS
  - a. Comments
4. Energy Development
5. Access
  - a. Part of recent active program
  - b. Active development/Indian Development
6. Sage Grouse
  - a. West Nile
  - b. Listing studies
7. Tim Murphy/RAC Involvement
  - a. Community Communication
  - b. Community Involvement
  - c. Ground Rules
8. Wild Horse & Burro
  - a. New Policies
9. RAC Selection Process
10. How federal, state, etc. work together for the law enforcement.
11. Questions to Director
 

Cultural/Historic sites protection and ACEC's

  - a. Budget
  - b. Enforcement

### **Weatherman Draw/ Powder River Depot Field Trip: (Kallevig)**

The Weatherman Draw ACEC is a 15,000 acre area south of Bridger. Out of the 15,000 acres, 2,400 have been inventoried and 31 new archeological sites have been discovered. Weatherman Draw is now listed as a National Register District which gives the area added protection under the law.

Weatherman Draw past issues have included:



- Clayton McCracken (Sierra Club) has presented issues to the BLM and RAC to encourage protection of the Weatherman Draw area.
- Continued funding for cultural analysis.
- Illegal activity in the Weatherman Draw area.

Will Hubbell, Becky Kallevig and Doug Melton have been developing maps dealing with issues at the Powder River Depot.

Issue items:

- Cultural resource data collection.
- Land owners and subject “on site” assessment.
- Registering this site as a federally recognized historical site.
- Public access. (RAC is supportive of this concept.)

### **Billings Shooting Area Subcommittee Report :(Lubbers, Gibson)**

The Billings Shooting Area subcommittee is in the process of developing a brochure that will feature maps/keys for designated activities with explanatory directions and regulations on enforcement for Yellowstone County.

Supporting organizations will have their logos printed at the bottom of the brochure. Copies of the Brochure are slated to be released in June 15, 2004 (draft) and the final copy will be completed Sept. 1 --before hunting season. The subcommittee will release a copy of the brochure to all RAC members for suggestions.

### **Public Access Subcommittee: (Gibson)**

Temporarily closed roads were identified/found and researched in Yellowstone County. The Yellowstone county commissioners warranted that the closure was unnecessary and these roads should be open for public travel. The subcommittee is asking the RAC to identify other areas to be addressed for access opportunities. Legally abandoned roads and the propriety of such were discussed. A subcommittee meeting is planned for June 22, to discuss these issues in Miles City with David Squires. Other case examples were also discussed regarding easements, as well as other access examples.

### **Energy Subcommittee Formed:**

A new subcommittee was formed to address various energy related issues i.e.: alternative sources, tribal issues, transmission issues and APD processing. Group members are: Neta Old Elk, Chuck Hauptman, Mack Cole, Robert Lubbers and Howard Boggess.

### **Resource Management Plan Subcommittee:**

A new subcommittee was proposed to address various issues regarding the formulation of an updated MCFO RMP. Printed material was distributed to the RAC as a take-home

project for discussion at the next RAC meeting. Membership would include the entire RAC and will be a topic for further discussion.

### **Meeting Evaluation/Wrap-up/Agenda**

The next meeting has been set for July 26 (evening social) & 27 (meeting), 2004 at Miles City, MT.

### **Next Meeting Agenda Issues:**

Possible agenda items may include: MCFO RMP, Subcommittee reports, signing, Law Enforcement and other topics yet to be identified.

The RAC members took turns giving comments as part of an “After Action Review” about the meeting(s). Mark Jacobsen will compile these comments and use them as a guide for future meetings.

**EASTERN MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Miles City, Montana**  
**January 15, 2004**

**Attendance**

RAC: Betty Aye, Jack Bailey, Howard Boggess, Jamie Byrne, Colby Branch, Mack Cole, John Ensign, John Gibson, Marion Hanson, Charles Hauptman, Becky Kallevig, Robert Lubbers, David Smith and Marty Ulrich.

BLM: David McIlnay, Sandy Brooks, Mark Jacobsen, Rebecca Makor, Mary Bloom, David Squires, Todd Yeager and Glade Hadden.

**Field Manager Updates:**

**Sandy Brooks, BiFO-**

- The Billings Field Office continues to work on the OHV Travel Management Plan. The four areas included in this plan are Shepard Ah Nei, Pryor Mountains, Horsethief and Acton. Shepard Ah Nei has heavy OHV use and BLM is being sued by a private homeowner for noise and dust pollution. Oral arguments will take place in February. The Horsethief area was scheduled for a 3000 acre fuel reduction project, but the contractor has had equipment problems. The project should ahead next week and will take approximately one month.

The Forest Service will be holding public meetings the first part of February in Bridger, Red Lodge, Billings, and Columbus. BLM will have a table set up at each of these meetings for public comments. BLM will be working on catching up to the Forest Service's plan which is doable since the Forest Service has a larger area.

- Denver is handling the contract for the Pompey's Pillar visitor Center. The contract should be granted in the spring with the ground breaking in the summer. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2005. Clark Days are the last Sunday in July which includes various activities such as a canoe float, pancake breakfast, bird hikes, camping, music, oral history, etc.
- R.L.F. Bighorn Properties, LLC (Bighorn Properties) and their agent Rock Mountain Timberlands continue to pursue a road right-of-way in the Grove Creek area. A decision letter requiring the land owner to pay for an environmental impact statement has been issued. BLM has to approve the contractor hired to the EIS. BLM will still be responsible for making the right-of-way decision.
- There are no plans this year for gathering wild horses in the Pryor Mountains. BLM will continue with the fertility plan. The wildhorse budget has been cut in

half so there will be no adoptions planned for this year except for one in South Dakota. The horse population increases by approximately 20% each year.

### **David McInay, MCFO-**

- The Billings Gazette ran an article on coal bed methane that was well-written and well-balanced. The article can be found on the Billings Gazette web page.
- The Miles City Field Office is coordinating the Resource Management Plan Revision. The documents for the Powder River and Big Dry areas will become one. Document production will be contracted.
- There is training session titled, “Planning Nuts and Bolts” in February. RAC members are invited to attend. More information will be forthcoming.
- OHV continues to be a priority in the Miles City Field Office with five priority areas. David Squires will give a presentation later on in the meeting.
- The Fire Management Plan will be updated regarding goals, staff, etc. Method of funding has changed and the plan will need to be modified accordingly. It is due October, 2004. The Forest Service has a meeting in Billings next week and BLM will be attending. An extensive program will be implemented in terms of getting people red carded. The BLM is working with various people to harvest timber on both private and public lands in the Missouri Breaks fire area. The BLM is also trying to put together a timber salvage plan in the Swain/Moon Creek fire area. At this point, it is not clear if there is a need in the market for this.
- The pilot effort continues with Hanging Women Creek. Meetings with all interested and involved parties continue. Progress is being made. A smaller group of volunteers from the group has been formed and will be reporting back to the main group. Jack Bailey has been closely involved in this project and noted the main issue is the water. As required under the EIS/RMP amendment, a water management plan must be submitted before authorization to use the land is given.

### **CBNG Presentation**

Mary Bloom from the Miles City Field Office gave a brief history and current status update on Coal Bed Natural Gas. Mary updated the group on the Hanging Women meetings. She noted the meetings consist of concerned citizens, industry representatives, landowners, etc., who are working on getting their concerns and needs known and BLM, attempt to have all parties discuss their issues and develop a collaborative problem solving process.

The group has been broken down to a smaller committee that will be taking proposals back to the larger group. There are mixed feelings and everyone is looking at various

ideas. The next meeting is yet to be determined. The RAC will be notified of the time and place.

The EIS/RMP directs interagency working groups to be established. Currently there are four task groups from an inter-agency working group that works on various areas. They are water, aquatics, wildlife, and air. Cultural resources are also at the top of the list. The next CBNG Interagency Working Group meeting will be Billings on February 18, 2004. The RAC will be notified of the time and place.

### **Knowlton/OHV post'03 hunting season/recreation report**

David Squires from the Miles City Field Office updated the RAC on the OHV Travel Plan. There are two phases being implemented. The first phase is signing. Signing for "Stay on Existing Roads and Trails" was started last fall. There are two types of signs being posted: Portal Signs; which are wooden signs--- and "Acknowledge the Rules" and Regulatory signs informing travelers of off road travel restrictions.

The second phase is travel planning. Areas have been prioritized with Knowlton being at the top of the list. Knowlton was a pilot project that was started in 2000 and was recently completed. There are six additional high priority areas and two moderate priority areas to be completed. David handed out copies of maps with the priority areas identified for the group.

OHV enforcement continues to be a concern as well as how to establish land boundaries and access to federal land and the Yellowstone River.

### **Public Comment Period**

No one was present to provide public comments.

Todd Yeager from the Miles City Field Office was invited to speak to the group regarding the new grazing issues/regulations. Todd noted there are two efforts underway: #1; Federal Register Notice to change rules; and #2; The EIS.

Comments will be taken until February 6, 2004 for the Federal Register Notice and comments will be taken until March 2, 2004 for the EIS. Comments can be submitted via the website or mail.

On February 2, 2004 from 6pm-10pm, the BLM will hold a public meeting at the Holiday Inn in Billings, Montana. Todd addressed questions and concerns the RAC had regarding the grazing issues.

### **Billings Shooting Area Subcommittee Report**

Robert Lubbers presented recommendations from the Billings Shooting Area Subcommittee. The areas involved are Acton, 17 Mile, Shepherd Ah Nei, and 21 Mile.

It was suggested the areas be divided for multiple use activity. There was some discussion on how this could be accomplished. Robert presented the group with a hand out detailing the recommendations of the sub-committee. He feels comments are valuable and encourages the RAC members to submit their ideas in writing. The RAC will be individually sending their proposed alternatives and solutions to the subcommittee by mid-February.

### **Weatherman Draw/ACEC extension report**

Weatherman Draw is a 15,000 acre area south of Bridger, Montana. 2400 of the 15,000 acres have been inventoried and 31 new archeological sites have been discovered. Weatherman Draw is now listed as a National Register District which gives the area added protection under the law.

The original ACEC has been expanded from 4500 acres to 8211 acres for drilling purposes. Recommendations have been submitted to the State Director to finalize plans.

Proposals include:

1. Remove from consideration oil/gas leases that would affect the area.
2. Enlarge the area.
3. Remove hold on leases outside the area.
4. Continue with cultural resource data.

Two of three leases went out for public bid. The third lease was withdrawn. Funding for this project is on a year-by-year basis. A budget of \$10,000 has been granted by the Washington office for field schools. There are currently two field schools. Becky Kallevig noted the Archeology Society will be helping with the foot work to locate cultural resources. They will provide volunteers and some funding for the project.

Weatherman Draw is a very controversial project. There is a large amount of rock art in the area, and it was noted that rock art has never been successfully removed and preserved. Yet many feel the need for oil/gas is of utmost importance. Discussions concluded that the bottom line is economic development vs. cultural preservation.

### **RAC Discussion Period, Items for Action**

The council members jointly identified the following list of items for RAC action:

1. Maintaining current sub-committees
2. Energy issues affecting BLM/developing a "Do It Right" definition for CBM.
3. Hanging Women Creek
4. Travel Management Plan (Billings Field Office)
5. Grove Creek sub-division
6. Resource Management Plan (Miles City Field Office)

7. Access to the Yellowstone River and public land
8. SWL
9. Powder River Depot
10. Cedar Creek Battlefield/Ash Creek Battlefield
11. Miles City Field Office Fire Management Plan
12. Sage Grouse Issues

The RAC members will continue/initiate the following efforts:

1. Billings Shooting Area and Weatherman Draw sub-committees
2. Additional meetings and field trips –between quarterly RAC meetings
3. The formation of a sub-committee to map out areas for improved public access (proposed by John Gibson). There is funding available from various sources to assist with this project. The Access Subcommittee consists of John Ensign, Jamie Byrnes, John Gibson, Howard Boggess, Becky Kallevig and David Smith.

The RAC members took turns giving comments as part of an “After Action Review” about the meeting(s). Mark Jacobsen will compile these comments and use them as a guide for future meetings.

### **Meeting evaluation/wrap-up/agenda**

The next meeting has been set for May 5 (evening social) & 6 (meeting), 2004. Meeting location will be at Sidney. Possible agenda items may include:

- Hanging Woman Drainage CBNG meetings/working group reports
- Miles City Field Office RMP update
- Miles City Field Office Fire Plan
- Reports by Billings Shooting Area, Weatherman Draw and Public Access subcommittees.