

Resource Advisory Council Minutes
December 11, 2007
Homewood Suites, Salt Lake City, UT

RAC members in attendance: Carl Albrecht, Dell LeFevre, Paul Jacobs, Mike Jenkins, Lowell Braxton, Ray Bloxham, Ashley Korenblat, Riley Cutler, Jerry Spangler, Gordon Topham, Drew Sitterud, Fee Busby, Tom Clawson, Lynn Stevens

RAC member not in attendance: Manuel Morgan

BLM employees: Selma Sierra, Sherry Foot, Jim Crisp

Members of the public in attendance: Jack Johnston, Morgan Jensen, Bob & Martha Wallen, Aleta Brown and Kira Thomas, Fran Cherry

A motion was made by Lynn Stevens to nominate Gordon Topham as Chairperson; Drew Sitterud, seconded the motion.

A motion was made by Drew Sitterud to nominate Fee Busby as Vice Chairperson; Tom Clawson seconded the motion.

What's Happening in Utah (Selma Sierra):

- Selma has been with Utah BLM as the State Director for over a year. She has visited most of the field offices.
- The Utah Table of Organization (to go to 3-tier) has been sent to the Washington Office. It's now in the Asst. Secretary's Office awaiting approval.
- There are vacancies that need to be filled (Moab, GSENM, Monticello, St. George, State Office Budget Office, Safety, NLCS, Recreation)
- The proposed new organization will look like this: Salt Lake District (Salt Lake and Fillmore FOs); Cedar City District (Cedar City, St. George, Kanab, Richfield FOs); Moab District (Moab, Monticello); Vernal District (Vernal, Price FOs); GSENM (reports directly to the State Director); Fire Organization, currently looking at possibility of alignments but not dismantling the structure.
- Fire Season: Largest fire - Milford Flats. Talking to our partners to address how fires are rehabbed and stabilization efforts.
- Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI): Enhance lands across the state. There is a group looking at this effort in treating the land.
- Oil Shale: R&D lease in Vernal--Programmatic Oil Shale Draft Documentation Notice - public document due to be published December 21. This looks nationally at the resource--also looks at the local environment.
- Nomination of 9-Mile Canyon Historic District: Advanced proposal sent to the state SHPO (about 2 months ago). Would not impact the Price RMP. SHPO provides information back to BLM--final decision is made by the results of SHPO. Per Jerry Spangler--SHPO state review has minor modifications--BLM will soon get the document.

- Crandall Canyon Mine Tragedy: There was a meeting today with the chairman of the Utah Safety Commission. The Mining Program function may be shifted to the Price FO from the State Office.
- RMPs: Will continue to stay on track with RMPs. Lot of time vested getting to the point of where we are now. Public meetings are currently being held or scheduled. Trying to complete the review & ROD signed in FY 08. Requesting funding for implementation in FY 09. Public comments and how they'll be reviewed--there is a team that is reviewing all comments (same team for each plan). Schedule to respond to comments has not been defined. Ideally, we'd like the plans to be reviewed every 15 years.

OHV Management (Robin Fehlau):

(Handouts available upon request)

- Feb. 2005, a subgroup report was signed and recommendations by subgroup were addressed in WO Instruction Memorandum.
- NRCC made up of the BLM, FS, State, UDWR, and SITLA work on communication and technical issues. Their goal is to have a seamless management approach to OHV management, signage, maps, designated routes, etc.
- National guidance (WO IM 2008-014) clarifies policies and provides additional guidance for travel and transportation management decisions into the LUP process. It looks at "all" forms of travel.
- There are formal agreements with partners and other user groups throughout the state that help the FO with recreation issues.
- Cooperative enforcement agreements throughout the counties are in place to help with law enforcement.
- Education - campaigns were done (safety, outreach, staying on the trails, tread lightly)
- Monitoring database - photo inventory (uniform across all BLM offices). Goal is to have handheld devices to download information.
- What can RAC do? Revitalize or create a new letter to the Congressionals. The October 2004 Congressional letter may have been misinterpreted by the Congressionals. BLM has tried to make changes using partnerships.

Take It Outside (TIO) Initiative (Patti Klein):

(Power point presentation - available upon request)

A new initiative designed to help children re-connect with the great outdoors, while building the next generation of environmentally conscious citizens.

- There is a national TIO team as well as a Utah TIO team
- In the process of revising the TIO website
- Developing granting program for BLM offices
- Developing strategy to highlight program within state and partners.

How can RAC become involved? Educate the public (parents, as well as, children). It starts with you!

Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI) (Don Banks):

(Handouts available upon request)

The goals of the Initiative are to restore, renew and rehabilitate the lands. Meeting both our energy and land health goals requires integrated, landscape-scale habitat protections and resource management. Our initiative combines investments in habitat protection with policy improvements that will protect 800 species, including the sage-grouse.

How can RAC become involved? Participate in regional action teams. The UPCD (Utah Partners for Conservation and Development) Team could give presentations to the RAC.

Crandall Canyon Mine (Kent Hoffman):

(Powerpoint presentation - handout available upon request, synopsis below)

- Federal Agencies with Coal Regulatory Responsibilities - BLM, OSM, MSHA
- BLM's Role in Coal Exploration - Issues exploration licenses on unleased lands and approves exploration plans on leases; ensures protection of the environment and reclamation of disturbed areas; receives exploration data to determine coal reserves; and ensures proper plugging of drill holes.
- BLM's Administration of Coal Leases - Identifies lands suitable for consideration for leasing through preparation of land use plans; issues and administers coal leases on all federal lands including national forests; regularly inspects leases to ensure compliance with lease terms and conditions; and verifies production from federal leases to ensure proper payment of royalties.
- Initial Development of the Crandall Canyon Mine - Original mine was a small operation in the 1950s. In 1980 Genwal started modern room and pillar mine with continuous miners and acquired an additional small lease near the portal.
- Mine Expansion - Genwal acquired by Nevada Electric and IPA; BLM issued ROW to access SITLA coal; mine implemented continuous haulage system; and new lease issued to encompass remaining federal coal.
- Final Extent of Mine - Andalex acquires Nevada Electric interest in the mine; longwall operations started on federal lease and progressed to SITLA lease; company failed to acquire Mill Fork tract to the south; consequently no further longwall acreage available; and started recovery of coal in barriers and pillars in mains
- Chronology of BLM Inspections and Actions Before the Crandall Canyon Mine Collapse - 2/23/05, R2P2 approved to place seals at crosscut 118 in West Mains with determination the MER was achieved; no recover of pillars or barriers attempted. 12/04 - 10/06 - mine successfully pulling pillars in the South Mains (SITLA lease). 12/14/06, 2/27/07, 6/13/07 - Regular quarterly inspections. 3/15/07 - special inspection, Company requested approval to stop mining in the North Barrier. Inspector noted that mine bounces (bumps) ha occurred. 6/13/07 inspection was the last BLM inspection before the mine collapse on 8/6/07.
- Chronology of BLM Actions Following Mine Collapse - BLM became aware of the incident through the media. 8/6/07 - BLM inspectors contacted the command center and offered assistance. 8/13/07 - BLM provided MSHA with geologic information from mine. 8/13/07 BLM approved drilling of surface holes to locate trapped miners. 8/17/07 - BLM contacted company representatives and expressed need for BLM to be involved in ongoing operations. 8/30/07 - BLM met with company and MSHA to discuss issue of company's need for approval regarding future actions on the federal coal lease. 9/14/07 -

Due to lack of submission of revised R2P2 and/or abandonment plan by the company, BLM issued a notice and order to company regarding unapproved mine closure activities. 9/20/07 - BLM approved plan to allow temporary cessation of operations at the mine. 9/28/07 - BLM approved plan to plug drill holes. 10/5/07 - Approved plan to install block walls in the portals and secure mine entrance. 10/26/07 - Notified company of their failure to properly plug the drill holes on federal lands. Working with company and FS to determine if current plugs are sufficient.

Oil and Gas Permitting Process (Kent Hoffman):

(Powerpoint presentation - handout available upon request, synopsis below)

- There are selected statutes relevant to energy leasing and development.
- Federal Leasing Process--BLM: Expression of interest/nomination; plan conformance & NEPA compliance; NHPA and ESA consultation/compliance; Post offering at least 45 days prior to sale w/30 day protest period; Preliminary review of protests and determine parcels to be offered for sale; Hold competitive sale; Formally resolve protests; Issue leases; Parcels w/no bids available for 2 years.
- Leasing on National Forest - BLM manages and administers leaseable minerals, including O&G, under the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act; FS manages surface resources and surface occupancy for O&G development under the NFMA and the Federal Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act ; Leasing - BLM must obtain authorization from FS to lease. FS assures NEPA and plan conformance & specifies lease stipulations. Permitting - FS must approve the Surface Use Plan of Operations prior to BLM approving the APD
- SUWA et al V. BLM - Kimball Leasing Decision; Wilderness inventory information gathered since LUP and NEPA completed must be analyzed in new NEPA document; Case remanded to BLM for further consideration of “no-leasing alternative” and to “consider significant new [wilderness] information”
- CNE v. BLM - Hemmer Decision; NEPA analysis for new information; Development of stipulations and protective measures must use NEPA process (analyze effect).
- APD - Notice of Staking; Valid lease/adjudication; On-site inspection, cultural and T&E inventories, etc; NEPA compliance; Technical reviews; Permit issuance and compliance
- Best Management Practices - New “Gold Book,” Revised Onshore Order #1, Best Management Practices website, and for energy, oil and gas - website www.blm.gov
- Unconventional Fuels - Oil Shale; Tar sands/oil sands; Geothermal

Public Comment: Jack Johnston, Utah 4WD Association, Salt Lake City. There is a perception that BLM doesn't like OHVs. Concerned that there is no representation of the OHV community on the RAC. New WSA areas (Price) - what does this mean? Perception that the 4WD Assn is being shut off. Offering to attend RAC meetings as a member of the public to give the OHV community perspective (if needed).

Next Meeting Date/Location: This will be determined at the RecRAC meeting which will be taking place Jan. 16-17, 2008, Price.

Meeting adjourned.

Approved:

/s/ GW Topham

Gordon Topham, RAC Chairperson

Date:

12-19-07
