

Summary Minutes
NEW MEXICO RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
February 28-March 2, 2006
Santa Fe

RAC Members Present:

Philip Don Cantu
Gerald Chacon
Bill Chavez
Mickey Chirigos
Matt Ferguson
Bruce Gantner
Betty Haagenstad
Rachel Jankowitz
Meade Kemrer
Mark Marley
Bob Moquino
Bob Ricklefs
Joanne Spivack
John Thompson

RAC Members Absent:

Cliff Larsen

Designated Federal Official:

Linda Rundell

Designated State Official:

Sally Rodgers

BLM Staff:

Eddie Bateson, Roswell FO
Doug Burger, Pecos District
Marcia deChadenedes, NMSO
Sam DesGeorges, Taos FO
Ron Dunton, NMSO
Thomas Gow, Albuquerque FO
Steve Henke, Farmington FO
Tony Herrell, Carlsbad FO
Theresa Herrera, NMSO
Buzz Hummell, NMSO
Jesse Juen, NMSO
Mark Lane, Socorro FO
Mark Lujan, Taos FO
Ed Roberson, Las Cruces FO
Ed Singleton, Albuquerque FO
Hans Stuart, NMSO

Scribe:

Karen Meadows

FEBRUARY 28, 2006

**NEW RAC MEMBER ORIENTATION
FIELD TRIP**

The Taos Field Office hosted a tour of the La Cienega Petroglyphs and a tour of the solid waste issues on public lands within the Taos Field Office.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Joanne opened the Public Comment Period at 6 p.m.

Heath Nero, The Wilderness Society (WS)

Mr. Nero distributed business cards. He is based in the WS Denver regional office, and is part of the WS BLM Action Center—which advocates for land protection. He said he is a nontraditional environmentalist, with a background in civil engineering. He graduated from West Point and spent five years on active military duty at stations including Iraq. He is interested in how BLMNM will manage land that has been identified as potential wilderness through citizen groups or BLM inventory, as well as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

He gave background information that 13.4 million surface acres are administered by BLM. From 2004 BLM public land statistics, 140,000 acres were set aside as WSAs. The WS conducted inventories that found 2 million more acres they think meet wilderness definition. So there are lands out there with wilderness characteristics that are not currently designated and not therefore protected. He is excited to see what BLMNM might decide to do to deal with WSAs and areas designated roadless.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Bill asked for a summary of what the WS was asking for.
- Heath said it is incumbent on BLM to apply the land-use process to protect lands with wilderness characteristics. About 270,000 acres are currently managed, and the NM Wilderness Alliance proposal moves that closer to 500,000 acres. He suggested BLMNM inventory those acres to determine whether they do have wilderness characteristics, and if they do, to determine how to manage them.
- Heath explained that generally wilderness areas have to be roadless, provide solitude, and be in a natural state. BLM also states that wilderness has to be 5,000 acres or larger. One area in the Farmington district and two in Albuquerque that are of interest to the WS are designated WSAs. The remaining acres are around the state. He could provide that information.
- The WS feels that BLM staff did what they were told to do, but doesn't agree with their analysis. BLM chose, for example, not to propose areas that were in a wash or had a line of sight that precluded solitude.
- Joanne said fully half of the areas currently considered WSAs do not have wilderness characteristics.
- Heath said that's what they disagree with. Noise or light pollution should not preclude wilderness designation. The criteria are open to interpretation.
- BLM does not have a specific definition of a road. Heath said the WS defines roads as constructed, maintained and not made by the passage of vehicles over time.
- Rachel asked whether the WS has analysis and explanation of the acres they consider wilderness. Heath will provide that.
- BLMNM sent wilderness staff out to check whether things had changed in response to WSA designation. The wilderness specialist said some WSAs didn't meet criteria at the time and are worse now, due to, for example, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Linda would be highly surprised if there are a lot of additional areas meeting wilderness designation criteria.
- An Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC) is not part of wilderness.
- Linda said the Florida Mountains outside Deming, for example, were recommended in the 1980s for wilderness designation, but not considered suitable because they were heavily impacted by mining claims. A species was introduced into the range that changed the ecology significantly.
- Linda is working around the state with wilderness organizations and local citizens.
- Ed Roberson referred back to progress over the years at conservation, reevaluation and improvement of certain lands under BLM management. Assessments were done in response to environmental groups, with parties sometimes finding ways to protect certain lands without designating them as wilderness.
- BLM staff provided further information to inform new RAC members.
- What can the RAC do to move WSAs forward or remove them from WSA designation? Only Congress can take those steps.
- Past RACs discussed this. And past Wilderness Alliance members did not understand the public's concerns—so upset locals. When the time is right, Linda will ask the RAC to get involved with local citizens.
- The RAC and BLM need more public input on WSAs.
- A growing body of people wants to know what other choices we have to preserve characteristics we want to preserve but not cripple ourselves, for example, in our ability to fight fires.

- Heath said there is a proposal near the Robledos where one area being scoped is within 100 feet of a road. Ed added that BLM could recommend that a slice be taken out of that area that the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) wants to put a sensor on. The Congressional Delegation meets often there on border issues.
- Meade did a WSA study on cultural values and saw the USBP patrolling the WSA with helicopters and ATVs.
- BLM rangers talk to new USBP agents about WSAs and public land ethics. There are also military maneuvers in the area.
- Linda said we need to bring the temperature down, go beyond rhetoric to reasonable choices, but haven't found a way to do that yet. BLMNM wants reasonable people to agree.
- Does BLMNM speak regularly with the Congressional Delegation? What are their sentiments?
- In the late 1980s, New Mexico's two senators came very close to drafting a wilderness bill for more than 1 million acres. It fell apart at the 11th hour. They have been reluctant to take action since then. She has worked with them for the past three years.
- There are two questions: the ultimate fate of current WSAs; and the possibility of future wilderness areas.
- The WS stand is that every WSA is worthy of becoming wilderness. For the 30 BLM says are inappropriate, there is a difference of philosophy.
- For 20 years BLMNM has managed as wilderness even those WSAs they consider unsuitable.
- The assessment was done with full public involvement.
- As technology improves, some oil and gas (O&G) activities could be undertaken with little environmental impact.
- Heath said he hasn't had that discussion with his policy people.
- In most wildernesses you can see power lines, hear traffic, etc.
- Former and returning RAC member Cliff Larsen and others tackled the wilderness issue. Larsen wrote a paper called "The Wilderness Puzzle," that Theresa provided to RAC members. (Attachment 1)

No other members of the public asked to speak.

Motion

Joanne moved to adjourn at 6:51 p.m. Rachel seconded. Motion approved.

MARCH 1

RAC MEETING

CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME, OPENING STATEMENTS

Joanne opened the meeting at 8 a.m. She introduced RAC member Mark Marley, NM State Land Office (SLO) representative Jerry King, and former RAC Chairman Raye Miller.

APPROVAL OF RAC MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 2005 (Attachment 2)

Motion

Joanne moved and Bruce seconded to accept the minutes as presented. Motion approved.

Linda asked Jerry whether he would like to speak. He addressed the meeting on behalf of SLO Commissioner Lyons. He has learned a lot about land management in the private sector as a BLM permittee. The SLO has the same mission concerning ACECs and WSAs as BLMNM in some areas and a different mission in others. He thanked BLMNM staff for its cooperation, including good progress on the exchange of 100,000 acres underway. He hopes to make a presentation on that exchange at the next RAC meeting, covering the process used and what was accomplished.

Linda said BLMNM has an outstanding relationship with the SLO. They have many issues in common, and the SLO is a professional outfit. One example of how well the two agencies are working together concerns the Sabinosa WSA near Las Vegas. It was set aside in the 1980s, but because of lack of access and mixed ownership, BLMNM considered it unsuitable. Now, BLMNM is working with the SLO to acquire state lands in one area that does meet wilderness criteria.

Sally introduced herself. She is the NM Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department Environmental Ombudsman. Her agency has several divisions, including Oil Conservation Division (OCD). There are many opportunities for cooperation on common issues. Her role on the RAC is partly to provide information that others may not be aware of, for example, the Governor's Initiative on Global Warming. She urged RAC members to contact her or view the agency website. She was pleased to see recent petroleum company advertising asking people, "What's your carbon footprint?" It is good to look at land management with that approach. She passed around a DVD of a program on global warming recently aired on PBS. We all have the obligation to become more aware of global warming, she said, and the DVD offers opportunity for citizens to contribute.

Linda said BLM was recently in the news because of the president's proposed budget, which included reductions for some conservation programs, and one component about selling public land. Congress will look at that budget and decide what it wants to do. It's too early to know what will result.

BLM and the Public Lands Council sent a letter to all permittees asking whether they would like to adopt wild horses.

The Energy Policy Act required BLMNM to set up two pilot offices and add staff for a one-stop approach to permitting in Carlsbad and Farmington. The Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Reclamation and US Fish & Wildlife share the Farmington office. Progress leads to expectations, so there is pressure on BLM to report back to Congress that they've done something with the additional funding.

Hans spoke about his role in the 100th anniversary of the Antiquities Act—the first law to protect heritage resources on public land. There will be events and outreach with partners including the NM Museum of Natural History. Projects include an energy education kiosk for middle school students; and CDs with information about conservation, alternative technology, energy and resources. The Taos Field Office (FO) is working with Indian students to record rock art north of Espanola.

Deborah Seligman of the NM O&G Association introduced herself.

New RAC members introduced themselves.

NEW MEXICO OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION (OCD) OVERVIEW

Mark Fesmire, OCD Director

Mark said OCD is the branch of state government responsible for regulating O&G operations. During the early 1900s, the law of capture governed O&G—so anyone who could drill a well could drill as much as they wanted and keep it for themselves. He showed a historic photo of California wells packed solid side-by-side. That approach caused a glut of oil on the market and resulted in significant waste. In the late 1920s-early 1930s, proration (some producers limiting production to keep prices from dropping) brought changes.

As a result of discoveries in TX and OK, the price of oil dove from \$1 per barrel to 4 cents per barrel. NM responded by creating the Oil Conservation Commission (OCC) and in 1935 passed the O&G Act—mandating that the OCC prevent waste and protect correlative rights. In the late 1960s environmental effects, especially on water, became issues. Environmental regulation fell to the states. Regulated under the 1935 Oil & Gas Act, a fine of \$1,000 was set and still stands despite changes in monetary values.

Does the Water Quality Act affect O&G? There are only four OCD environmental inspectors to deal with violators, and even if caught, violators are still liable for only \$1,000. The current statutory scheme is insufficient to protect water resources. We need to prevent contamination rather than remediate.

OCD is a general fund agency that regulates oil, gas and high-temperature geothermal production in NM to protect human health and the environment. Mark tries to change the rules—some of which have taken 10 years to implement—to bring in newer concepts. The industry is changing, technology has changed, and OCD has to be able to move more quickly than in the past.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Public Service Company has some geothermal sites in the Jemez on forestland between Fenton and La Cueva. What’s the status of geothermal properties in that area? Leases are still owned, and negotiation is underway
- Concerning understaffing, what happened with the bill before the Legislature? The O&G conservation tax primarily goes into the general fund.
- Joanne noted her education in legislation, including how bills are changed in committee. She asked Raye Miller and Deborah Seligman how they felt about the 2006 session.
- Deborah said O&G was not willing to concede to the legislation taking “knowingly and willingly” out of the statute, nor on allowing the OCD to fine without going to district court—two important protections the O&G industry has in law currently. If that bill were run again today industry would ask for the same protection. As additional fines are being passed along, they must show in court that permittees have done something wrong.
- BLM and OCD are asking that O&G operators spend time and effort maintaining their equipment, so there will not be breakdowns.
- The RAC would like to see copies of potential legislation.
- Is there cooperation, especially in enforcement, between BLM and OCD? Field staff cooperate. BLM has about 60 inspectors throughout the state working together with OCD inspectors to coordinate visits and become more efficient.
- Mark said there is no reason for inspectors from the two agencies to inspect the same places. The NM Legislature funded three new positions, but nine staff are retiring. The total work force is 62. It will be difficult to fill all positions.
- There are unintended consequences, including those resulting from pit rules. What is anticipated for all waste hauled? In a certain field Bruce thought of, it would mean a lot of trespassing, with 80 more truckloads a day from a number of pits. While operators are moving toward dual locations and cutting traffic, this will increase. There are a lot of downsides to hauling water. Many would be glad to make provisions for alternative methods and a solution that’s cheaper and less intrusive on surrounding areas.
- Generally waste is just left on sites, sometimes buried.
- There are downsides to both arguments. Another concern about hauling is shortage of properly constructed permanent facilities to haul to. Currently drill pits are wrapped and buried 4-8’ deep. Environmentalists agreed to isolation and burial as the best current approach.

- Of 1,376 active remediation projects in NM, over 500 impact water quality. One has been confirmed as a cause of water contamination, and five are probable causes.
- What are the impacts or consequences of water contamination? Salt is the primary contaminant. Research consensus is that hydrocarbon contamination is not as much a problem as salt. It depends on type of soil, and water table or surface water. Contamination is a significant problem in SE NM.
- OCD environmental regulations primarily protect surface water. Protecting soil surface and near-surface has been a concern to ranchers.
- O&G development roads and traffic have had greatest effect on wildlife. The response to salt has not been completely assessed.
- Money collected for fines has gone into the general fund. Agencies would like it to be used to fill new positions. We do not want OCD inspectors to be bounty hunters.

UPDATE ON OTERO MESA (Attachment 3)

Ed Roberson, BLM Las Cruces District Manager

On his handout Ed pointed out the McGregor Range, which BLM co-manages with the military. He referred to a write-up of what the district is doing, including an update on the Otero/Sierra County Fluids Plan. He indicated Otero Mesa, and mentioned grassland areas like one between Nutt and Hillsboro where there are occasional sightings of aplomado falcons. The falcons are thought to travel through that area, but there is no knowledge of their nesting there.

No wells have been drilled in the past eight years while the two-county land use plan was completed. The 2004 proposed plan addressed fragmentation of habitat and a cap on development, with locational controlled surface use. Stipulations require that development be followed by successful restoration and can only disturb 5% of any leasehold. That includes use of units that combine leases to be managed as one—which grew out of RAC discussions—to minimize surface disturbance. BLM restricted about half a million acres with controlled stipulations. The agency wants to have a reasonable program that contributes to the wellbeing of the public.

The governor's consistency review revealed places where he thought BLM had not successfully addressed and presented alternatives. His concerns included tribal consultation, transition from the 2002 plan, cultural remains, water issues and game and fish. BLM supplemented the proposal in several areas, for example, withholding aplomado habitat from leasing. Also, the Caballos will remain on hold if the state takes action on bighorn sheep.

The consistency review was appealed. The Interior Secretary and BLMNM State Director decided the BLM plan was appropriate and issued a Record of Decision (ROD) January 24, 2006. Lawsuits were filed. Issues focused on tribal consultation and cultural sites. It was recommended that future plans include working with tribes to mitigate past impact before leasing. Cultural clearances include on-the-ground proposals.

Other issues included whether NEPA was followed, whether there should have been further public comment, and how the Endangered Species Act related to aplomado falcons. On January 24 BLM went to hearing. The judge will attempt to make a decision by end of March.

The Bennett Ranch 1,600 acre unit lease expired. The plan analyzed a level of development of 140+ wells over the life of the plan (40 years) with 800-900 acres disturbed. When assessed on NEPA terms for reasonable foreseeable development, BLM made that into a stipulation. At 1,600 acres, BLM will stop and negotiate to see whether the plan is sufficient to meet an environmental impact statement. With 5% stipulation in grassland, 32,000 acres could be leased without going beyond the 1,600-acre threshold disturbed.

Industry nominated 250,000 acres that have now lapsed and there is interest in additional leasing. There are 70,000 acres in Crow Flats, east of Otero Mesa, where leases will expire this

summer. When those leases expire, Ed will propose additional leasing based on interest. He concluded that BLM needs to encourage O&G development in an environmentally sound way.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Joanne clarified that they are talking about 5% surface disturbance in grasslands, with as many as 1,600 acres disturbed for drilling of no more than 140 wells over the entire two million acres, over 40 years.
- Are we more at risk from losing the grasslands by juniper invasion than O&G development? BLM is working on that, doing a lot of shrub work and asking industry to tear up creosote adjoining drilling sites.
- We need to reassess acres lost to invasive species, some due to past overgrazing. Jornada Research Range has shown that some converted areas have had only slow encroachment over time. Creosote and mesquite are at stasis. We don't know that we should invest in restoration because the historical type of landscape is gone. The manager's update covered threatened species.

FIRE & DROUGHT UPDATE

Ron Dunton, BLMNM Deputy State Director

The upcoming fire season is upon us. At that moment 10,000 acres were afire near Cimarron with 35 mph winds. Scientists say we are in a long-term drought. Generally that would mean not much of a fire problem because there's nothing to burn. But last year was wet, so grass grew that will now be fuel, especially in eastern NM. We're facing what happened in the 1988 season, when there were burns from March through September and the monsoons never hit. Cattle keep the grass down, but cattle were taken off the land a few years back. There will be large grass fires on the east side of the state, and national forests will probably be closed.

Crews are better trained and better equipped than in the 1980s, but fires in oil patches could cause explosions. Nationally more moisture came and there will be fewer fires, so firefighting resources will be available to NM.

Question/Answer/Comment

- After the big pinon loss, if needles are down, fires will burn but won't spread tree to tree in a crown fire. It is best to clear them.
- Sally said a Los Alamos team is working on modeling fire threat due to pinon loss.
- Without complicating factors are there areas where grass fires would be beneficial? There are no let-burn areas, but there are some places fires would be managed.
- Drought will certainly affect grazing rates. About 95% of the time ranchers reduce grazing before BLM has to step in. Las Cruces FO is experiencing the highest non-use of grazing land ever seen.
- Will there be prescribed burns? It depends. BLM has a good program with the state. The issue is whether they want to burn in a long-term drought with no probable recovery.
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) last forecasted that watersheds are from 0-15% of average. Lake Powell will fill; Elephant Butte won't.
- As studied by University of AZ in tree rings, this drought could last 50 years.
- Monsoons generate grasses but are unpredictable. Snow pack in mountains doesn't do much for BLM lands. There's evidence that when there's no snow pack there's more monsoon.
- BLM looks at forecasting and past statistics. They expect forests to close, no boating season, and the need to warn campers. They will evaluate where staffing needs to be directed. Taos

FO is coordinating with the Chamber of Commerce. BLM expects to get the brunt of those visitors who can't go into national forest.

- BLM started bringing out-of-state fire resources into NM in January. Las Cruces staff planned to go on 7 day/24 hour shifts the following week.
- Certainty related to precipitation lessens during continued warming. The proportion of winter precipitation will decrease. It would be good for BLM to address this long-term.
- BLM nationally expects recreation to move north.
- Near Cuba, USFS planned to close forestlands to all use April 1.
- There's a bumper crop of elk and less forage—a controversial point for ranchers. Elk will move onto private land, and into prescribed burn areas.

RECREATION UPDATE (Attachment 4)

Marcia deChadenedes, BLMNM & Washington Office

Representative for the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST)

Marcia showed a map of the 3,500-mile 'King of Trails' stretching from the Montana border to Mexico. It was created through 1978 legislation and has not been completed primarily because of higher priorities and lack of resources. The Secretary of the Interior challenged her agency to complete the trail by October 2008—the 30th anniversary of its creation. Funds were earmarked for a full-time liaison to oversee completion and management of the trail. Marcia is the liaison, headquartered in NM because it has the most trail remaining to be completed.

The CDNST vision is to provide for scenic high quality hiking and horseback experiences while preserving and connecting the trail to significant natural, historical and cultural features.

BLM manages land along two national scenic trails and 10 national historic trails in the western states. NM has 227 miles of the CDNST. Of those, 150 miles of private and state land are the most challenging to work with. Marcia includes volunteers and partners to incorporate resource management techniques in the planning process and enhance the visitor experience. Last week the National Scenic and Historic Trails Strategy & Work Plan was published. It is available on the BLM website.

CDNST partners are:

- Defining optimum routes
- Defining a network of supportive partnering with hub-town service industries
- Commencing construction on a segment between Lordsburg and the Mexican border
- Engaging the SW Conservation Corps for seven weeks of trail building
- Engaging in private and state land easement negotiations
- Initiating the *No Child Left Indoors* campaign—to generate a positive emotional response that takes this effort into the future with broader cultural and socioeconomic access

Marcia noted activities along certain segments of the trail. Those involved with the trail within two miles of Cuba meet regularly to determine how to continue around the town. Other trail challenges include a bluff, lack of water, acquisition needs and border security. Marcia is working with Rotary Clubs of Mexico and NM on the trail's southern portal.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Some saw part of the trail on a RAC field trip. Who has jurisdiction where this trail overlays existing uses—whether motorbike, ranching or woodcutting?
- There are many answers to that question. Motorized use could mean occasional ranch use or a road with regular use at 50 mph. Where planners consider crossing permittee land, it's a

matter of helping landowners buy into the program. They consider issues like gates, number of visitors and potential impact. It's a matter of respect and negotiation, with some land exchanges. They have created new alignment for the trail in some places.

- How do you provide camping without conflict? The trail primarily crosses public land where people can do primitive camping. Education will be needed.
- We need to direct people to acceptable areas to get water, protecting springs on existing maps where there would be cultural resources. Trailhead facilities plan to supply water.
- Negotiation for where the trail should be is at ground level. When final location is achieved, Congress will approve the trail.

**UPDATE ON TAOS FIELD OFFICE
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP) REVISION
Sam DesGeorges, Taos FO Manager**

The Taos RMP amendment concerns 700,000 surface acres + subsurface acres. The RMP is in its 15th year, while the area has been affected by population growth and urban interface. Planning issues & management concerns include:

Land tenure and land uses in Santa Fe and Taos Counties

- Adjustment including growth in unincorporated areas has resulted in piecemeal requests for BLM to accommodate needs for land ownership changes.
- There is opportunity to facilitate infrastructure development in unincorporated areas.
- Counties, cities and some utility providers are key.
- Taos FO is looking at a long-term proactive approach v. short-term reaction for requests for right-of-way.
- Utility corridors are needed.

Special area designations (new or additional)

- Initial community response to change was to ask for designation of a special management area.
- Taos FO anticipates the focus to change to prescription or land use and land tenure adjustment as the RMPA evolves.

Santa Fe County issues

- Cerrillos Hills, incorporate BLM land with park
- Buckman Road as possible recreation area
- Galisteo Basin cultural site protection
- La Cienega/Cieneguilla—expand ACEC
- Santa Cruz Lake—expand recreation area boundary

There are things we can do, for example, provide land for water storage, but the point is how it's sited. BLM can prescribe mitigation ahead of time. Special area designations arise, and established areas need to be reevaluated.

Rio Arriba County issues

- Ojo Caliente—expand ACEC or possible Special Resource Management Area
- El Palacio—add value to land or lose it

San Miguel County issues

- Sabinoso ACEC

Taos County issues

- Ute Mountain—potential designation

Visual Resource Management (VRM)

- The RMP only identified VRM classes for a few special management areas
 - Where there is no vision across the landscape, we are using a piecemeal approach to decision making and management—need to work with communities on how they view those areas.
- An opportunity to strategically manage for change into the future
- Could be developed at ‘landscape’ scale

OHVs

- Given current level of interest in OHV access, management and lack of national strategy, BLM needs to develop strategy to implement current direction.
- Redesignate most ‘open’ areas to ‘limited’ to comply with new guidance. The Galisteo area seen on the field trip is currently designated open.
- Designate ‘primary’ and ‘secondary.’
- Defer designation of additional routes to a transportation activity plan.

Mineral materials

- Residential growth requires that we reassess where and how to provide mineral material opportunities.
- Develop criteria to determine how/where areas could be closed, limited or available.

Preliminary planning criteria

- Allow for flexibility
- Adaptive management
- Update RMP to comply with new handbook guidance
- Collaborative approach with public, agencies and tribes—scoping never ends, meet people at the kitchen table
- Conduct two economic strategies workshops. Agriculture affects the economy minimally, but open space, watersheds, etc., are values maintained by agriculture.

Data and GIS needs

- New data
 - VRM inventory
 - Roads and trails
 - Mapping mineral material sites
 - Socio-economic data/analysis

Public and agency participation

- General public
 - partnership approach, meet on their home turf
- Potential cooperative agencies include: NM Department of Agriculture, NM Department of Game & Fish, and the two national forests, three counties and two cities involved.

Cooperative agencies can bring someone into the planning process as a partner in providing information and guidance before the plan is complete.

Process for the plan

- traditional format
 - will adjust to provide landscape/watershed perspective
- alternative formulation
 - each issue will have an array of actions
 - preferred actions will be noted
- internal review
- inputs from team

There will be multiple solutions for every issue. Sam showed the plan's proposed schedule with key planning steps, resulting in an ROD/approved RMPA in the second or third quarter of FY 2009.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Las Cruces FO is undergoing a similar process. The FO got its scoping report done on time, and is looking for public input at the alternative stage, partly due to a RAC recommendation.
- Joanne asked about cities engulfing agricultural areas. There is pressure from environmental groups to designate specialized areas. Are they using WSAs as an urban planning tool to create no growth? How does BLM balance that? Sam said growth is best addressed by communities working with elected officials to identify desired community futures. In Taos, tribal lands and national forests primarily determine that. BLM is part of the discussion.
- A controversial law in Rio Arriba County attempts to stop traditional agricultural land from being sold off.
- One size never fits all. This issue is ripe for discussion in all western states.

RANGE SCHOOL

Robbie Baird LeValley, CO State University Cooperative Extension Agent & Rancher, Delta CO

Range School is all about how to teach grass growth, grazing systems, range nutrition and grass management to a bunch of cowboys and bureaucrats. The school is in partnership with USFS, NRCS, universities and BLM. The course objective is to provide the principles of range management with the best available science and information about on-the-ground applications for the care and management of rangelands.

Principles are, for example, grass growth, freeze, grasshoppers, root development, and drought. All presenters have practical experience on the land and know how to make a system work. The school has been active since 1995 teaching what's good for the landscape and how that plays for other values.

They provide in-depth range education via classroom instruction, rangeland monitoring workshops, range management schools, drought workshops, field tours and practical applications based on science. They get people on the ground to observe the landscape together.

The Range School grew out of 1993-1995 controversy over 35% v. 37% grazing utilization. It was developed by the permittees, who have helped tweak it over the years. Permittees wanted everyone to listen to the same message. They begged range specialists within the agencies and environmentalists to come to the Range School.

The Range School takes a comprehensive principle-based approach to help participants understand rangeland and implement grazing management plans. They help participants work through barriers. You don't have to dumb things down for people that are out on the ground observing. She advised go with who you've got—it's most important to move forward.

They do one day in a classroom and one in the field—start a conversation, understand complexities, and even come up with solutions. There is a written curriculum. The BLM national office provided funds to print the notebook of background materials and presentations.

Robbie listed the curriculum:

- Grass, forb and shrub growth—they go out and dig up roots
- Environmental factors affecting growth and vigor
- Length of time and timing of grazing
- Range nutrition
- Animal behavior—wild and domesticated and how they are interrelated
- Designing the grazing strategy
- Range monitoring
- Grazing response index
- Using livestock to manipulate vegetation
- Tying it all together

Results: over 3,500 permittees, federal land managers, wildlife personnel, environmentalists, general public, private rangeland owners and public officials have attended the Range School.

Robbie showed slides of progression on acres treated by Range School principles from 1991 to 2000. The BLM/USFS land shown was divided by fence with two different groups of permittees, some with active recreation, some with mining activities. Applying principles of plant vigor, with attention to limited concentrated moisture, permittees dropped from 27 to 21 days of grazing at mixed times. Changing grazing management made a difference. Based on the principles of grass growth, users can improve the grazing management system despite adverse temperature and rainfall. Ranchers saw increased weaning weights and increased conception rates. The system made animals easier to control and when the rains came, range responded significantly.

The Range School has not solved all problems. This is education, not conflict resolution. Characteristics of ranchers are making the changes. The Range School was requested by permittees—who designed the curriculum. It focuses on principles and does not dwell on systems or recipes. It focuses on the biology of the plans and the community. They related it to livestock nutrition and rangeland health. It is a collaborative forum.

Invasive weeds? Teach people to know when weeds are susceptible and take steps then. At the right time ranchers can hit the weeds with cattle or sheep. Some Range School ranchers used cattle to thin oak brush. Cattle open up the smaller diameter areas. The next year cattle remember, go back and open it up even more—setting back encroachment. Some weeds they won't eat but will trample. CO ranchers tried spraying molasses on old decadent sagebrush in the fall. The cattle ate more than they would have otherwise, and trampled it down so new young growth came in. In some cases ranchers deliberately overgraze an area and come in with seed. WY and UT are doing similar work with sheep.

Agency range specialists reiterated information gained in the Range Schools. The door was kept open, so permittees came to agencies with ideas. Everyone has the same level of understanding as to what the land could look like and various tools that could be utilized. Communication between federal and state agencies and permittees has increased tenfold. Agency range specialists were

highly encouraged to attend the Range Schools so they would hear the same messages as the permittees

Recently US Fish & Wildlife started sending district wildlife managers and habitat biologists to Range School—over 100 have attended. Observation powers have increased significantly. People see results on the range and subsequent productivity in their livestock. Permittees see where they can provide input to the RMP process.

This is just a start. Think about who on the team you could bring in. Make sure it's somebody on the ground. Just start. CO Range School will train trainers to help another state get started. But local people are the experts.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Tribes are another component in NM with huge impact.
- This could be sponsored by an agency rather than a university, but needs a committed group to start it. A university with research capability should be included. It would be very helpful to the statewide watershed plan.
- In the early 1990s NM made an attempt using the master gardener concept, but timing was off—there was resistance from agencies. There's a more cooperative approach now, so it would work, probably easily. NM still hopes to get direction from CO. We need leadership to bring people to the table. Monitoring has brought people to the table.
- Robbie said if you can't get something started larger, start close. CO didn't invent anything new; they just started. Sometimes when the umbrella gets too big, it gets heavy. So pull back to what works for your area.
- Mark Lane said he talked with people in NM after Robbie made a presentation at the Quivira Coalition meeting last year. He hopes to start a group in Socorro, and hopes RAC will carry the message to get support statewide.
- Some players, for example, universities, hold back for a while and then join in.
- The Range School has no website at this time.

RECLAMATION ISSUES IN SOUTHEAST NEW MEXICO

CHANGING THE PARADIGM

Doug Burger, Pecos District Manager

Restoration of vegetation & habitat is the key to success. Some restoration activities in SE NM are cutting edge, some not. The NW is also working on restoration and the two regions share ideas. There are nine counties in the Pecos District, 3.5 million surface acres and 10 million mineral acres. It is a major petroleum producing part of the state. Fifty percent of royalties go to the state, \$1-1 ½ million/day, which is 1/3 of NM's annual budget. The area has been heavily developed, with over 6,000 federal leases filed since the 1920s. Three million acres are under lease, with 29,413 active wells. Forty-one percent of wells are federal, and ~150 are plugged per year.

Keys:

- Develop in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Reclaim land when production is done.

Despite use of best management practices, one size does not fit all. Early coordination is needed with operator, agency and surface owners. Avoid sensitive areas and minimize impacts. Carlsbad FO hands out CDs describing ways to successfully reclaim land. Operators can reduce the footprint of producing wells. He showed examples of good and not-so-good approaches for well pads, ditches and roads. It is important to minimize roads. A book on road standards was put out in

the past few months. He recommended making sure that local governments could choose to minimize roads.

Helpful techniques include undulating roads that follow topography, causing less impact. During the drilling phase roads may have to be big for safety, but can then be minimized. Centralize tank batteries. Use raptor-proof power lines. Modify poles to prevent electrocution. In lesser prairie chicken (LPC) habitat, BLM avoids high structures, routes lines around nesting areas or buries them, and removes poles leading to inactive facilities.

Color selection minimizes contrast. Desert tan doesn't work. Paint it one shade darker than the background to blend in; and paint everything on site the same color, including equipment added later.

Repeat landscape texture. Avoid pads on steep slopes where there would be more disturbance that's harder to reclaim. Screen with vegetation or in a swale. Avoid skyline. Use low-profile tanks, although that makes a bigger footprint. Plan with the operator. CDs that Carlsbad and Socorro FOs distribute tell operators, for example, to snug new pads next to existing roads so fewer roads will be added. Re-contour roads and pipelines.

He referred to the sand dune lizard (SDL) and LPC, which we can prevent ever being listed as endangered by improving their habitats.

Most wells have a 39-year lifespan. He showed effect of reclamation on landscape through time. BLM wants to work with whomever owns the land to catch and clean up messes. Some issues are not attributable to current operators, but were handed down.

Mixed ownership creates problems. Through the original Homestead Act in 1862, a citizen could claim 160 acres + mineral rights. The 1909 Act expanded that to 320 acres, mostly uplands where more acreage was needed. In 1914, Congress retained the minerals and created split estates, raising homestead size to 640 acres with no mineral rights. Now there are 26 million acres of federal surface rights with 36 million acres of federal minerals, so 10 million acres are private surface with federal minerals. Most ranchers don't have problems with clean operations. Abandoned sites, however, are problematic.

Doug traced the history of reclamation policies. From 1920 to the 1990s, caliche was ripped, which doesn't work. When caliche is removed, reseeded land responds well. He showed sand dunes and roads restored for SDL habitat, and recent caliche removal areas where vegetation came up even without seeding. We can reclaim tough areas with rain, topsoil and some effort.

BLM continues to build partnerships. The *Adopt a Ranch* plan partners O&G companies with ranchers to cooperate on reclamation. The Natural Resource Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentive Program applied \$1.2 million last year to reclamation. BLM went to the NM Association of Conservation Districts and received funds that have been matched in dollars or in-kind services by several O&G companies.

A number of abandoned wells are left, so BLM looks for owners or figures out how to get reclamation done. Industry sees these abandoned wells their former colleagues ran away from as an embarrassment.

Doug finished with before/after slides of mesquite, creosote, cat's claw and salt cedar control.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Experts say pads built on caliche are more vulnerable to encroachment. Doug said it's different where caliche that was applied on the surface is removed. It's harder for grasses to come up where shallow soil is placed over caliche.
- Removed caliche can be buried on location, in a pit, or reused for other roads or wells.

FEDERAL LANDS RECREATION ENHANCEMENT ACT (REA)
Buzz Hummell, BLMNM Outdoor Recreation Planner
Judy Levin, USFS Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness Resources Director

REA summary

- The new Recreation Enhancement Act passed in 2004 allows five federal agencies (USFS, BLM, National Park Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service and Bureau of Reclamation) to charge fees at some sites for the next 10 years.
- Fee revenues will be used to repair, improve, operate and maintain recreation sites.
- The act outlines the criteria under which agencies may charge a fee.
- The act also consolidates four existing national fee passes into one *America the Beautiful Pass*. The problem is that wherever users buy the pass, that agency gets the money and other agencies would not benefit.
- The act provides for public participation, including RACs or special recreation RACs.
 - Department of the Interior and Agriculture Secretaries are required to either establish Recreation RACs or utilize current RACs.
 - An interagency agreement would authorize the USFS/BLM to work together with existing BLM RACs.
 - Current draft policy directs that the BLMNM RAC would be utilized to address both BLM and USFS recreation fee program issues. USFS sites include west TX and OK national grasslands.

RAC role

- Serve in advisory capacity concerning
 - Implementation or elimination of standard or expanded amenity recreation fees
 - Implement fee level changes
 - Expand or limit the program
 - Implement non-commercial, individual special recreation permit fees
- The RAC would have no role in non-agency operated facilities or special recreation permits.

BLMNM has 12 recreation fee areas with 20 fee sites generating about \$354,000/year that barely maintains them. Judy added USFS information. She showed a graph of 562 developed sites including campgrounds, trailheads, etc. This program covers about 100 of those. There are required amenities for sites to qualify for the fee program, including highly developed picnic areas and trailheads, as well as high impact recreation areas like Sandia Crest near Albuquerque. Expanded-amenity fee sites include campgrounds, cabins and boat ramps.

Special recreation permits are being considered for OHV or snow play areas. Typical fees ranges from \$2 for a picnic area to \$80 for a group campground. USFS currently has a Fee Board of 10-12 persons that reviews the business plan, project proposals and fee changes. That board would screen topics before they came before the RAC.

Region-wide USFS fee revenue was roughly \$5.4 million in FY 2005. National forests in NM, OK and TX accounted for approximately \$647,000. Most NM USFS sites are near Albuquerque and Santa Fe. AZ has a RAC that will oversee that state's fee areas.

Expected workload for BLMNM RAC

- Review fee changes at existing sites.
- Advise on new fee sites or special recreation permit proposals.

- Give input on simplification of fee system.
- Present public concerns.

The agencies don't expect vast changes, so think this would be a minor workload for RAC. There are two possibilities: 1) this RAC could take it on; 2) this RAC could develop a subcommittee that would hold separate meetings and report to the RAC. Judy listed Recreation RAC subcommittee requirements, some of which are met by the current RAC. Nationally, BLM and USFS are working on an agreement that allows for the current RAC choice, but the subcommittee choice might become a requirement.

Question/Answer/Comment

- When is this supposed to start? Agencies anticipated agreement within days or weeks.
- Due to budget cuts RAC meetings have already been reduced from five to three yearly.
- Requirements for this act do not include public meetings on site. The USFS would use a variety of means to solicit public input and synthesize it for the RAC.
- It would be up to the RAC how often USFS reported and how much time was allotted. They estimated that the worst case would be four hours of RAC time twice annually.
- The RAC could look at proposals in that time but not formulate plans. Time would also be needed for reviewing background information.
- The RAC would primarily consider whether existing fees should be increased and a few developing sites be added. The agencies anticipate soliciting feedback for proposed actions already being considered.
- The *America the Beautiful Pass* only applies to areas where there is an entrance fee, mostly not applicable in NM.
- If rolled into existing RAC duties, the only difference would be that on one morning of each meeting the RAC considered proposals on USFS and BLM fee issues. On controversial issues there might be more visitors during the public comment period. Buzz and Judy recommended trying it.
- Is this process really so simple that we don't need a lot of background information to make a good judgment call?
- Linda said this was done because Congress responded to public complaints about fees. The RAC would get the agencies' proposals that include response to public comment. They would also hear public comment at RAC meetings.
- Further discussion. The subcommittee choice would not simplify this. The RAC still would have to make recommendations.
- The process now used for the RAC to advise BLM requires a quorum.
- RAC charters would be updated across the nation to include this. Further discussion. The RAC could use web and phone conferencing. Members would want to receive information prior to meeting.
- To what extent might agency deadlines determine when or how often RAC meets? There are some proposals both agencies have held, waiting for this decision to be made. There will be a designated federal official from USFS at the recreation portion of meetings.
- The RAC could request further information, or even that further public meetings be held.
- Joanne suggested that some current issues be brought in as soon as possible so the RAC can gain experience. Rafting companies are private and therefore those fees are separate. This agreement specifically addresses fees, but the role of RAC members as representatives of the public should include potentially controversial issues. This makes it formal because it was legislated.

- It was confirmed that there was a quorum and proper mixture of representation for the RAC to make decisions.

Motion

Mickey moved and Gerald seconded that the BLMNM RAC prefers to have the option to decide for itself whether to operate as a whole RAC group or create a subcommittee to address recreation fees for the USFS and BLM. Motion approved.

Motion

Joanne moved and Bruce seconded to adjourn at 4:42 p.m. Motion approved.

MARCH 2

RAC MEETING

Joanne called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m.

AGENDA REVIEW/ORGANIZATIONAL DETAILS (Attachment 5)

Instead of working group reports at 10 a.m. the RAC agreed to discuss what members would like to accomplish through working groups.

SANTA FE COUNTY/BLM SOLID WASTE

Mike Anaya, Santa Fe City Commissioner

Sam DesGeorges introduced Mike Anaya and Constituent Services Liaison Jennifer Jaramillo. Sam said he and Mike have worked on several projects together and converse often.

There is a problem with illegal dumping in our counties, our state and our country. Locally, the area surrounding La Cienega is a dumping site, so a constituents' group got together to talk about what to do. Representatives of La Cienega, the SLO, BLM, and the county met several times over the past two years. A brainchild project of Mike's was a DVD about the La Cienega Task Force put together with the help of Jennifer and of Ron Madrid from the sheriff's department. The group hopes the DVD and other projects will stop, or at least cut down, illegal dumping.

The Santa Fe County Commission and La Cienega had community cleanups with volunteers, county workers, sheriff's department and other agencies providing materials or labor. Their partnership includes shared funding to patrol and prosecute violators, and to address parking and trespassing. Land ownership is mixed so they needed a broad partnership. Linda said continued success rests on continuing collaboration.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Did fencing stop the problem or did dumping just shift? There's continued dumping above this area on the mesa, so plans are underway to move up into that area.
- Mickey recommended applying for grant money from *Keep NM Clean & Beautiful*. One dollar of each vehicle registration fee goes into that fund. They couldn't pay county employee salaries, but could hire youth or neighborhood associations, or buy tools.
- Betty asked about trespassing. Someone determined enough could cut fence and dump. But the collaboration involves many different people, so attitudes may change. This is a societal problem that wraps into all aspects of community. The group is considering many ways of working with individual situations.
- BLM requires community service instead of fines, so whoever is caught dumping goes back and cleans up trash.

- Illegal dumping of solid waste can result in a \$1,000 fine or 60 days in jail. Some is construction debris. There is also a HAZMAT problem. BLM staff has training to take care of that kind of material.
- Is the word getting out on patrol and enforcement? Is dumping reduced? We can't completely stop it. The community is spreading the word, which has reduced the amount of dumping. Locals say it's people from other areas dumping. Deputies are working nights and weekends and keeping logs. They may stop 15-20 vehicles during a shift.
- Illegal aliens are not necessarily educated about legal/illegal dumping. They don't know about permits or where to go. We need to continue and broaden education. They tracked one case to an empty residence where the owner had paid people to clean up the yard.
- Dumping goes on anywhere and often is from within the nearby community, like Ojo Caliente and Chimayo.
- Mike said the main thing the county needs to do is open more transfer stations and keep them open longer hours/7 days. When somebody goes to the transfer station with a load of trash and it's closed, they aren't going to go home with it. Transfer stations cost a lot, but officials are trying to keep fees as low as possible.
- Pay people to bring in trash, a few bucks for appliances or a full truckload.
- Betty said her county has removed the fee for residents. Espanola has confused things by asking for a water bill to prove residency, because people aren't prepared for that.
- How about tires, spray cans, oil? The regional solid waste station Caja del Rio accepts those. Other sites have special containers they put HAZMAT materials in and transfer to Caja.
- NM Association of Counties meets yearly and has shared information with the La Cienega Task Force and with sheriffs' affiliates. The Governor's Task Force is also working on this.
- The idea for the BLM contract with the sheriff's department grew out of a contract with the NM Highway Department to patrol the Taos River Corridor.
- Mike thanked Linda and her staff. He could not have done this without cooperation from all the agencies. He hopes BLM continues to help in any way it can. His door is always open to discuss issues. He gave out SF County pins and cards.
- The Farmington area has CUPID—Clean Up and Prevention of Illegal Dumping. Bruce will talk to Steve Henke about an agreement with the sheriff for patrolling. Earth Day activities include cleanup.

ILLEGAL DUMPING: IS THERE A RAC ROLE?

- The RAC could make recommendations, for example, that Albuquerque educate and provide law enforcement for 20,000 acres of open space. The city works with neighborhood associations. Big items were a problem, but aren't now. Solid Waste Department periodically picks up large items. They cleaned up some BLM land where contractors were dumping, and the city put up a huge fence. There are transfer stations in the mountains. *Keep Albuquerque Beautiful* distributes grants. Mickey used grant funds to hire a 14-year-old to pick up trash in a neighborhood park five days a week. People can hire cheerleading groups or sport teams for cleanup projects—usually at recreation sites.
- Large items, chemicals, syringes and condoms are a serious problem. Transfer stations don't always take HAZMAT.
- Bruce would like to see a statewide educational team. BLM, SLO and others could have periodic campaigns. NM Environment Department is rewriting the state plan for solid waste management.

- Gerald said dialogue among the groups managing dumps statewide helps. They have an annual conference, educational materials and outreach staff. We don't need to reinvent the wheel. But get the dialogue going about other types of trash.
- Betty knows of working groups taking part. Contact the Governor's Task Force.
- It's harder some places to recycle than to dump trash. Fencing makes it difficult for walkers and some wildlife, and interferes with the view. If you're trying to stop motor vehicles there are other options. Use a two-wire fence of posts to deter vehicles.
- Patrolling is very important.
- The SLO is very involved. There's synergy to address problems and be proactive.
- Offenders sentenced to community service and prisoners pick up trash. We need to involve Department of Transportation (DOT)—especially in patrolling. They have a cleanup program. But we need agency coordination. Ten years or so ago there was a toll-free telephone line for people to call if they saw dumping. There was a reward system. DOT has a hotline. Where is it posted?
- The SLO demanded liability insurance for volunteer groups that wanted to clean up one of their areas. Bruce thought he'd signed a liability waiver in the past. BLM has a volunteer agreement that covers liability.
- Working with counties is the first line of defense. Bernalillo County changed ordinances on large items. Other counties need to make changes.
- How about bumper stickers that say, "Watch for illegal dumping. Call 1-800...."? We could get buy-in, add agency logos and put them on agency vehicles for cheap easy public awareness.
- The increase in dumping coordinates with closing of waste dump sites on state and BLM land. Look again at opening dump sites or transfer stations. Mora has no tax base, just 2,000 square miles of poverty. The solid waste station in Ocate closed due to legal problems, so it's 80 miles to the closest solid waste station.
- That's a broader problem than realized. Federal government mandates closed down mom and pop dumps. Further discussion.
- Check with the state organization that meets annually. The Council of Governments is a good contact. Bill Chavez suggested bringing the chief of his organization (NM Environment Department) in to speak at the next RAC meeting.
- Joanne and Linda will visit the DOT Secretary. Bill will talk to the head of solid waste disposal. Gerald will track the statewide organization. Mickey will investigate grants like Albuquerque gives. NM Department of Game & Fish vehicles are highly visible, and would be good places to put bumper stickers.
- The SLO might exchange lands with counties for waste sites.
- Betty has a great deal of experience with waste management sites, and gave perspective on current issues. Discussion continued on what's being done elsewhere and what's planned for the future.

WORKING GROUP REPORTS

Former working groups addressed O&G, grazing and access issues. The Access Working Group produced a document on OHVs that BLM adopted. Which working groups does the RAC want to continue or establish?

Question/Answer/Comment

- Gerald is interested in establishing a Range School.
- Linda recommended having working groups respond to topics that arise.

- Bill remembered land exchange involvement.
- Jim Jackson from the SLO recently met with BLM districts to identify areas they want to exchange. In Farmington especially they're actively working on that process. The SLO is also talking with private landowners, because their perspectives may be quite different from BLM/SLO.
- Rachel thought wilderness areas were also an issue.
- John would like more direction, something specific from FOs. What tangible result could a working group have? They would have to be very focused on an O&G issue since there's great controversy.
- We want to choose something we can accomplish.
- Not all BLM issues lead to tangible results, but every now and then a project—like Range School—comes up.
- If the public wants a forum to talk about wilderness, RAC could provide that forum.
- Cliff Larsen will join the RAC and has experience in wilderness issues.
- Linda would like a group to consider how BLM could work with illegal dumping issues. Sally agreed. Action on that and the Range School would have tremendous value.
- Consider having a recreation working group that would respond to the REA and bring issues to the whole RAC.
- Issues that rise out of the energy bill might become a project.
- Linda reminded the RAC that their recreation role might bring in significant public comment.
- John, Sally and Gerald volunteered for a Range School Working Group.
- Bruce, Linda, Sally, Joanne, Bill, Betty, Gerald and Mickey volunteered to form an Illegal Dumping Working Group.
- The RAC has been helpful in specific land exchange cases by speaking with private landowners.
- Mickey, Joanne and Meade volunteered to form a Recreation Working Group. They would like to know about “pent-up” issues.
- Buzz said there are no new areas where BLM plans to initiate fees. BLM can still issue regional passes. The agency would have public meetings, create a business plan and put out a proposal for public input—a 90-day process. Then they would summarize for the RAC, with copies of public comment. The process has strict guidelines. BLM fees are low. People like amenities so they might agree to new fees. At Valley of Fires, BLM put in showers and handicap access, which brought in a new kind of visitor used to paying fees and willing.

Joanne read aloud the proposed letter to Secretary Norton and the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture about a Recreation RAC—based on the motion they approved. Should the departments decide there must be a subcommittee, who exactly would form the subcommittee? Buzz's understanding was that the subcommittee would be entirely made up of RAC members. It's still gray area. If the departments decide there should be a new committee with members representing specific segments—some RAC, we need to think about the process for finding those people.

SOUTHEAST NEW MEXICO MINERAL CONFLICTS

Tony Herrell, Carlsbad FO Manager

Tony showed a map of potash mines located 10 miles west of Carlsbad. There is historic conflict between the potash and O&G mineral industries. Potash was discovered in NM in 1925 by

an O&G company, and potash mining began in 1929. Potash is used as fertilizer; and NM is the only place in the United States where potash deposits can be mined. One type of NM potash is found nowhere else in the world.

Tony spoke about geology, explaining how potential is determined for both O&G and potash. BLM used GIS information to map 2,814 O&G wells clustered within the potash area perimeters. Socorro FO combined production history and geologic structure to determine that most of the area has medium-to-high potential for O&G.

Both O&G and potash mining companies drill or mine in several geologic layers. Areas where potash ore has been measured are protected from O&G mining. The other issue is the history of Department of the Interior Secretarial Orders determining how the area has been managed. From 1939 to 1986 the potash area grew from 43,011 acres to 497, 813 acres.

There are 854 existing leases, covering over 300,00 acres. Chisum Trail Ventures is the largest affected O&G lessee. Most of its leases have remained in suspension. BLM analyzed which leases came first where the two are both present. By acreage, about 60% was leased first for potash.

Currently potash can be mined ¼ mile from oil wells and ½ mile from gas wells. That distance was first stipulated in the Secretarial Order of 1975 after a 1973 accident when potash was mined around wells. Breaks apparently allowed methane into the shaft and there was an explosion injuring 10 miners. This needs to be researched because it's fundamental to current problems.

Question/Answer/Comment

- Potash is running about \$175 a ton. Compared with an adjacent O&G well over its lifetime, the value of potash is higher. Potash mining takes more time, equipment and personnel than O&G. A well would therefore provide more profit, so it depends on how you look at.
- Grades mined now are about 7-11%. They have to mine 1 ½-2 tons of ore to get one ton of potash.
- Think vertically. Methane could have risen from several hundred feet below. Since 1973, with few exceptions that has not recurred.
- We're in a period where potash and O&G companies are having good dialogue and working out what to do. More research is needed not only on safety but also on future mining, since this is the only place potash is. We will have to work around the wells, and hopefully will figure out how to safely do that.
- Potash is mined from 800-2,200 feet. It creates a great deal of tailings. Need to do containment in areas where there's fresh water.

NEXT MEETING & AGENDA TOPICS

The next meeting was set for May 15-18, 2006, in Cloudcroft, with a field trip to Otero Mesa through the McGregor Range grazing area. The August meeting was tentatively set for Carlsbad.

May Agenda

- Presentation on road issues around Fort Stanton—BLM/USFS
- Water well drilling
- Wilderness

Motion

Joanne moved and Mickey seconded to adjourn the meeting at noon. Motion approved.