

**Bureau of Land Management**  
Northeast California and Northwest California  
Resource Advisory Councils

**Joint Business Meeting**  
Wednesday, May 11, 2005  
Redding, California

**Summary Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**

Category One

Northeast RAC: Lee Chauvet, Ken McGarva, Skip Willmore, John Erquiaga, Todd Swickard. Northwest RAC: Charlene Wardlow, Don Klusman, Stan Leach, Ruth Shriber.

Category Two

Northeast RAC: Martin Balding, Terry Williams. Absent: Frank Bayham, Wes Finley, Gerry Nordstrom. Northwest RAC: Bob Warren, Michael Kelley, Ryan Henson, Diane Beck.

Category Three

Northeast RAC: Nancy Huffman, Jim Chapman. Absent: Tim Garrod, Frances Benally, Henricus Jansen. Northwest RAC: Philip Moyer, Bill Radtkey, Eugene Parham.

BLM Staff: State Director Mike Pool, National RAC Coordinator Twinkle Seitts, Deputy State Director (resources) Tony Danna, Deputy State Director (external affairs) Jan Bedrosian, Arcata Field Manager Lynda Roush, Alturas Field Manager Tim Burke, Eagle Lake Field Manager Dayne Barron, Redding Field Manager Steve Anderson, Surprise Field Manager Owen Billingsley, Ukiah Field Manager Rich Burns, Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana.

Don Klusman called the meeting to order at about 10 a.m.

The agenda was approved as mailed.

The meeting objectives were approved.

**State Director's Time**

Mike Pool discussed several topics:

- He thanked the members for willingness to provide expertise and advice on everything demanded of BLM.

- He said the BLM has valued members' advice over the years, and asked members to speak with BLM if they feel the agency is under-using their expertise. BLM wants to correct that situation if necessary.
- Mike noted that he just celebrated 30 years with BLM, and observed that the agency is facing more challenges than ever before. He said new public mandates have led to the growth of the BLM from an agency where small staffs managed large areas to development of an agency – while still small – that relies on multi-disciplinary staffs to deal with land management and natural resource issues that have drastically increased in complexity. Population growth and increasing demands on a finite resource base continue to pose challenges. He said BLM field managers are the “front line” in dealing with these complex demands.
- He reported on Capitol Hill visits in which he and External Affairs Chief Jan Bedrosian visited the congressional delegations for the entire state. He said members of Congress were complimentary about BLM management approaches. He reminded RAC members that Congressional representatives are “being pulled in many directions” by their constituents. To illustrate, he said, there are 9,000 registered lobbyists on Capitol Hill.
- The state director said BLM budgets are lean, along with other federal agencies. Budgets will continue to be tight as the nation continues to address international concerns and commitments. He said BLM will have to begin to de-emphasize some areas to adjust. Mike said he will work with the management team to make the decisions relative to the national budget directives. He said the next two years pose really tough times for BLM, requiring the agency to focus on its core mission. Mike said the primary goal will be to maintain a core employee base to address the agency mission. He added that the BLM will rely on its expertise in partnership development, seeking grants and outside funding sources to pursue land management and natural resource conservation objectives. He said BLM has endured tight budgets in the past and expressed confidence that the agency will find ways to deal with the current situation.
- He asked that RAC members continue to work closely with their constituents as they provide advice to the agency. His goal is to ensure that all interests are represented and considered as the BLM makes resource allocation decisions.
- Mike noted that there will be times when their constituents will not be happy with BLM decisions or policies. We need to realize that there will be tradeoffs that we need to deal with. We need to consider everyone in decision making. He said dealing with protests and appeals is an opportunity to evaluate how well we are considering public needs. Public involvement is paramount in the BLM's decision making.

- Mike stressed that RAC members are essential in BLM's function. He said the BLM does not have all the answers and looks to RAC members to provide important information.
- Mike said he strongly supports land use planning and the importance of RAC members input in development and implementation of these plans. He stressed that planning is a core function, directed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.
- He said BLM's highest priority issue now is fuel reduction. He serves on the California Fire Alliance, addressing these issues, and the need to reduce fuel loading statewide.

Responding to member questions, Mike noted the following:

- There have always been unfunded mandates facing government agencies. The public asks for actions, but funding sometimes does not follow. A major challenge now, with reduced funding, is implementing land use plans that have been developed. We have seen expansion of volunteerism in helping us to implement plans. Members of the public are better informed and more willing to assist.
- BLM websites continue to be down and there is currently no timeline for reconnection. We need to complete security improvements before we reconnect. The situation relates to the lawsuit Cobell vs. Department of the Interior relating to management of Indian Trust Fund accounts.
- We have received good responses to News.bytes. We are using that communication tool to keep people well informed.
- Comment: National designation for the Sacramento River Bend has been an interest of the NW RAC. Mike said national recognition and designation is a way to increase visibility and improve the ability to generate funding for management.
- Comment: The BLM image has changed because BLM lands are seen as important to many. Is BLM getting a bigger share of federal funding as a result? Mike said the BLM still lags in funding-per-acre compared to other federal land managing agencies. He said the demands on BLM are starting to reshape traditional thinking in allocations. People want recreation access to public lands and they are making that demand known BLM is trying to provide more funding through the Recreation Fee Demo program. Mike said recreation differs from other BLM programs because there is no legislative mandate for the BLM to manage for recreation.

- Mike did not know whether the Sierra Club was invited to the Recreation Round Table held in Las Vegas. BLM was not an event organizer; Mike was an invited speaker.
  
- Comment: There seems to be more money diverted to administrative costs than work on the ground in the fuels reduction area. Can administrative costs be reduced and can prescriptions be adjusted to look further into the future?  
Response: Mike agreed that funding needs to be spent on the ground as much as possible. BLM continues to evaluate projects with an eye toward how much money has been spent. We are continuing to evaluate the health effects of prescribed fire work, leading to more need for mechanical fuel reduction which has a much higher cost per acre.
  
- Question: Where is BLM in the land exchange, sales and other tenure adjustment issues? Mike: Land exchanges peaked in the mid 90s. The easiest exchanges were completed. Exchanges are now more complicated as market values increase. Longer completion times lead to problems with keeping appraisals current. BLM wants to take better advantage of the Baca Bill to directly sell parcels and keep funding for acquisition. Mike has introduced a working MOU with federal counterparts to allow Baca Bill transactions to occur in California. BLM's percentage of revenue is 60 percent. In California we see the potential to generate revenue that can be used for important acquisitions.
  
- Nancy Huffman asked how much leeway the field managers have in budgets. Mike said funds are allocated from the Department of the Interior according to the Department priorities. The annual work plan directives specify programs in which funding will be spent. There are occasional line items directing how funding must be spent, but they are rare. For example, Sen. Feinstein was instrumental in directing line item funding for the Headwaters Forest Reserve. Mike said the Baca Bill process will not eliminate land exchanges. We can still use exchanges where appropriate. The bill will give the BLM purchasing power that the agency has never had. Mike said the land use plans can identify exchange or direct sale opportunities.
  
- Question: Can Baca Bill funds be used for maintenance, or just acquisition? BLM needs funding to maintain the public land it now manages (Huffman). Mike said the current law does not allow for funds to be used for maintenance and restoration. There are hopes that future amendments might allow for that. Disposal of isolated parcels removes a taxpayer burden. Often lands being acquired are adjacent to larger public lands blocks and can improve management efficiencies.

- Todd Swickard commented that constituents are concerned that too much funding gets tied up in planning and does not get to the ground in the form of needed treatments.
- Jim Chapman advised that when members of the RAC contact members of Congress they should represent themselves as members of a federal advisory council – not as representing the advisory council.
- Don Klusman said RAC members “miss our News.bytes.” Mike said we will launch some profiles of other state attractions and activities and add a trip of the month feature highlighting public land destinations, including travel tips and information when News.bytes returns to the internet.

### **National RAC News and Issues**

Twinkle Seitts introduced Tim Murphy from the Office of the Solicitor.

Twinkle summarized a meeting with the Executive Leadership Team and noted that budget was the primary discussion topic. Twinkle announced that Larry Benna is the new BLM deputy director. He has been BLM’s chief financial officer and is well qualified to assist in budget decisions.

She stressed that BLM managers have been asked to look into the future as to what we can accomplish.

Twinkle discussed the current internet shutdown, and noted there are some public safety websites still active. BLM is working to build a migration schedule to bring sites back online when they are deemed secure. Each will be tested for security before coming back on line.

In the Wild Horse and Burro Program, BLM has suspended sale authority after instances of horses being re-sold to meat processing plants. The animals subject to sale authority remain in long term holding pastures. BLM is working with foundations and others to find homes. Herd management areas nationwide are about 9,000 over the appropriate management levels.

Ryan commented on his satisfaction with participation in an adoption event in Redding.

Skip asked about wild horse impacts on the ground. Twinkle noted that overpopulation can lead to damage to vegetation and water sources.

Henricus asked for clarification on the decision to suspend sales. He said the sale authority directed BLM to directly sell “horses that no-one wants.” He said the BLM is “bungling” administration of sale authority.

Twinkle said the BLM had received assurances the horses would not be re-sold for slaughter. Tim Murphy said much of the concern from the director is that the animals are a cultural icon and there are concerns about public perceptions. BLM wants to make every effort to be sure that horses sold under the new sale authority are not re-sold for slaughter.

Jim Chapman said the legislative process that gave BLM sale authority caused a public relations problem for the BLM.

Stan Leach noted that Forest Service RACs distribute Secure Rural Schools Act funds. He asked about BLM's RACs' roles. Tim Murphy noted that the regulations creating BLM's RACs did not include authority to allocate funds, and noted that the BLM and FS RACs were created under different authorities.

### **Guest Speakers**

#### **Dave Meurer, Congressman Wally Herger:**

Dave thanked members for their public service, telling them "your voice matters." He said he has a great relationship with BLM and particularly appreciates BLM reaching out to communities – "you play fair." He discussed the upcoming resolution on a potential national designation for the Sacramento River and said Congressman's question is what do the locals think? He also mentioned editorial in Searchlight regarding land sale authority. He wanted to know what people think. "Your reactions are important" and "your input is welcome" were his basic messages. He said he appreciates BLM giving him a heads up when controversies arise. These are "our lands" and we appreciate hearing what you think, he said.

#### **Steve Arrison, California Department of Fish and Game, Region One:**

Steve represented Regional Manager Don Koch. He and described the mission of Fish and Game and collaborative work they do with BLM. He said the overall goal is to maintain resources and natural communities for the public's benefit. He recognized the inherent incompatibles that sometime arise. Although BLM's mission may be slightly different, he noted there is common ground. He described the regional responsibilities and the basic programs of the DFG in the region. He noted the habitat-based mission for wildlife areas and the regulatory mission relating to other lands. He acknowledged increase in acquisitions due to bond issues, etc., and the problem with keeping pace in caring for those lands. He described the personnel (10 permanent employees in region to manage the 130,000 acres under their care – 35 wildlife areas and other unstaffed areas, not including game wardens).

He said staff members are involved in environmental review of BLM planning documents especially as they relate to habitat conservation.

Regarding trails, he said the DFG is working to find ways to minimize impacts of developments, including trails, on wildlife habitat. He acknowledged that if the agency does not own property it has less control over actions on it. Therefore, he said DFG works to influence uses on other lands through regulation, where appropriate, or through discussions.

### **Advisory Council Charters**

Tim Murphy of the Office of the Solicitor provided an overview presentation on the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and how it applies to the functions of BLM Resource Advisory Councils. There is a copy of his PowerPoint presentation attached to the minutes.

He said the act, passed in 1972, addressed concerns that groups were exercising undue influence on government agencies. The intent is to ensure that agencies are operating in full view of the public. It is a procedural statute. It applies to executive branch groups formed to provide advice to federal agencies. It does not apply to individual advice or operational committees.

He said agency decisions made in concert with groups balanced under the provisions of FACA generally are easier to defend because the agency has listened to a variety of balanced viewpoints in arriving at a decision.

Tim clarified that when the agencies call together groups of people for advice, and exert management control over that group, it will probably fall under the requirements of FACA. The act probably would not apply if interest group representatives were providing individual advice to the agency.

Tim noted that the BLM advisory committee regulations, not FACA per se, set forth the membership categories as a way of achieving the balance required by FACA.

There was continuing discussion about the group structure and voting protocol set forth in the RAC charters. Stan Leach said the concern over the voting requirements is almost moot because the council has no decision making authority. In these cases, he said, the RAC has shown in the minutes the feelings of the majority of people at the meeting.

Mike Pool said it is important that the RAC honor FACA. Mike said he will pay attention to discussions held where there was no RAC quorum, but depending on the complexity of the issue, he would weigh more heavily a formal recommendation that followed FACA and RAC charter requirements. Tim noted a RAC recommendation short of FACA requirements would be more difficult for the BLM to follow and later defend.

Tim noted that the councils attract high level interest – up to the level of the Secretary.

Mike said when groups discuss issues without quorums present the BLM can take information as part of the overall information being received, just as all information is treated during issue scoping processes.

Nancy Huffman noted the importance of remembering that the RAC's role is strictly advice.

There was discussion about the ways teleconferencing could be used to discuss issues when quorums were not present. The general opinion was that there might be limited opportunities for teleconference use, but it could not replace public notice and public participation principles of the advisory councils.

Skip Willmore noted that the length of time required to fill vacancies creates problems with achieving quorums.

### **Issues Common to Both Councils**

Don Klusman noted the issues on the flipchart are common to both, and could be good topics for future joint meetings. Don assumed the members present would like to continue the tradition of joint meetings. These issues included:

- Noxious weeds
- Fuels
- Habitat
- Forestry
- Of Highway Vehicle management

### **Off Highway Vehicle Grant Requests**

Sky Zaffarano, outdoor recreation planner for the Redding Field Office, presented information on the off highway vehicle grant programs new regulations. He noted that BLM offices annually apply to California State Parks' Division of Off Highway Motorized Recreation Division for grant funds to help provide OHV recreation opportunities for the public. The grant funds, derived from a portion of gasoline taxes and off-highway vehicle registration fees, are commonly called "green sticker" funds.

An important item is a new public notice and input process required for all applying agencies. There are four steps: public notice, review, comment and late comment. All agencies must notify the public about the grant application 30 days prior to the grant application deadline – June 10 this year. The review includes a project description, including costs and past successes. The agencies will accept public comments until June 3, and include the responses in the final application to the California State Parks Division of Off Highway Motorized Vehicle Recreation. Ukiah, Arcata, Redding and Eagle Lake Field Offices have applied for green sticker funds this year.



## **Working With Constituents**

Mike Pool asked that members “do their homework” with constituents to determine their positions before participating in council meetings. He stressed the issue identification is an important function of each council.

He said the councils provide the opportunity for as many publics as possible to participate in the public land planning and management process. He said full public participation is important because that is how BLM can defend decisions and have a better chance to avoid litigation. He said sound public process enables BLM to prevail in appeals before the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

He commended the group for respecting one another despite strong and sometimes conflicting points of view.

Ryan Henson said the BLM exhibits a stronger culture of openness compared to other agencies he works with, and it is important regardless of whether he agrees. He said the BLM is better at dealing with the public. Mike credited the managers and the employees. Don Klusman echoed Ryan’s comments.

Klusman said the RACs are testament to BLM’s commitment to working with the public in an open atmosphere.

Jim Chapman said that his experience on the Lassen County Board of Supervisors (60 percent of the county is BLM or Forest Service-managed) is that BLM is “head and shoulders” above the other agencies in terms of dealing openly with the public.

Henricus Jansen commented on members needs from the BLM. He said the members need more information from the BLM about “who is forcing the agency in which directions.” The members need to understand the pressures it faces. That would enable the RAC to better advise the BLM and to better represent the BLM’s position to members’ constituents.

Mike responded that BLM’s management mandates stay within sets of parameters regardless of administrations and changes in political direction. Emphases may change, but the public land management mandates and overall direction remain basically the same. He stressed that BLM land use plans continue to govern local management.

Nancy suggested that RAC members have more input from the BLM management on how best to avoid issues that will delay completion of land use plans. The Northeast RAC is currently advising on BLM land use plan development.

## **Closing Business**

**Future joint meetings:** Bob, Skip, Jim suggested annual meetings would be beneficial. Jim said joint meetings have value from the perspective of discussion regional issues, such as the shift away from timber based economies. He said regional understanding will benefit both councils.

Nancy Huffman said annual meetings might be “too much;” maybe the groups should meet when there is a need. Henricus agreed.

There was a consensus for an “as needed” approach to joint meetings. Chairmen Lee Chauvet and Don Klusman agreed that members can attend one another’s meetings to share information about issues.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

*Summary meeting minutes compiled by  
Jeff Fontana, BLM Public Affairs Officer  
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