



*DRAFT*

**2008 ANNUAL WORK PLAN**

**ARIZONA BLM RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

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March 6, 2008

## **SCOPE OF THE COUNCIL**

The Arizona BLM Resource Advisory Council (RAC) is a chartered 15-member citizen body appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. Council members represent a wide spectrum of public interests across Arizona, including grazing, energy/minerals, commercial recreation, off-highway vehicle use, transportation/rights-of-way, environmental/conservation, dispersed recreation, archaeology/historical, wild horse and burro, elected officials, Native American Tribes, academia, state natural resources, and the public-at-large.

The Council provides representative citizen counsel and advice to the Secretary, concerning the planning and management of public land and resources in Arizona. The Arizona RAC advises the Secretary through the BLM Arizona State Director. Members of the RAC are appointed by the Secretary to serve for three years on a staggered basis.

The Council is responsible for developing recommendations for the BLM, regarding the preparation, amendment, and implementation of land use plans for the public lands and resources in Arizona. The BLM Arizona RAC provides the BLM with a representative citizen forum with which to receive public input, and to analyze various proposals affecting public land and resources. All Arizona RAC meetings are open to the public and any person may file a statement or appear before the RAC, regarding topics on its meeting agenda which is published in the Federal Register. In general, the Council meets at least quarterly, with field trips planned as appropriate.

The Arizona RAC operates in accordance with an Annual Work Plan developed by its membership in coordination with the BLM Arizona State Office. The Annual Work Plan is reviewed and approved by the Arizona RAC at a scheduled public meeting early in the fiscal year.

### **2008 Annual Work Plan**

The BLM Arizona RAC will address the following issues during 2008. However, unanticipated circumstances may occur to cause the RAC to add or subtract issues and/or otherwise influence the priority and attention the RAC may devote to any issues. The issues are listed below as either action items, or ongoing information items.

Action items contemplate the RAC taking action during the year (generally through the passage of a resolution), while informational items are ordinarily ongoing issues where the BLM will keep the RAC informed. However, the Council may amend this work plan based on the Director's request and at any time if it is determined that information items should become action items (or vice-versa) or if new issues arise.

## **I. ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Administration (S&Gs)**

The Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Administration are the key metrics that guide Arizona BLM's oversight and management of grazing on public lands. The RAC was instrumental in assisting BLM formulate the S&Gs which were approved by the Secretary of the Interior in April, 1997. The RAC continues to assist BLM to ensure oversight and consistent implementation of the S&G process, including rangeland health monitoring and Rangeland Resource Team (RRT) functioning, across the state. Given that the S&G's were approved over a decade ago, it is appropriate to conduct a review of the history of RAC's role in developing and implementing S&G's for grazing administration. It is also appropriate for the RAC to provide guidance to the BLM on the implementation and monitoring of S&G's, including RRT oversight, and to give appropriate recognition to those individuals who facilitate the S&G process.

*Action: The RAC S&G Work Group will work with key current and former RAC members and BLM personnel to develop a report titled, "A History of The Arizona BLM Resource Advisory Council's Role in Developing and Implementing Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration." The aim of the report will be to provide a historical perspective that will be relevant and useful to current RAC members, BLM staff and land managers, public officials, and citizens who volunteer to serve on Rangeland Resource Teams (RRT) in Arizona.*

*Action: The RAC S&G Work Group will continue to review and prepare recommendations regarding implementation and monitoring of S&G's and changes to BLM grazing regulations, policies, and procedures on grazing management.*

*Action: The RAC S&G Work Group will give appropriate recognition to those individuals who facilitate the S&G process*

*Action: The RAC S&G Work Group will monitor compliance with RRT guidelines and provide recommendations to improve consistency and effectiveness of RRT operations throughout Arizona BLM field offices.*

**B. Resource Management Planning**

The Arizona BLM has a full slate of land use plans in various stages of completion. Many of these plans are related to National Monuments that were designated in the late 1990's. As of March 2008, the following planning efforts are in various stages of development and implementation:

- Las Cienegas National Conservation Area Land Use Plan (Implementation)
- Lake Havasu Land Use Plan (Implementation)

- Grand Canyon Parashant National Monument/Vermillion Cliffs National Monument/Arizona Strip Field Office Land Use Plans (Implementation)
- Aqua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw – Harquahala Land Use Plans (Implementation)
- Yuma Land Use Plan (Final)
- Ironwood Forest National Monument Land Use Plan (Final)
- Sonoran Desert National Monument and Phoenix South Land Use Plans (Draft)

Based on the adopted protocol, the RAC will continue to review land use plans as mandated by the charter. Part of the implementation of the plans will be helping BLM develop its travel management plans.

*Action: The Arizona BLM will provide the RAC periodic updates on the status of each planning effort. A more in-depth briefing, including citizen proposals, will be provided the RAC during development of proposed RMP/EIS alternatives. The RAC will review and comment on land use plans, including BLM draft preferred alternatives, before final decisions are made by the Arizona leadership team. The Land Use Planning and Tenure Work Group will assist BLM in coordinating RAC review and comment on land use planning efforts.*

*Action: The RAC will review the current protocol for RAC review of land use plans and revise as necessary.*

*Action: Special RAC meetings will be convened as necessary to provide timely comment at critical decision points in the land use planning process.*

### C. Land Tenure Strategy Development

Arizona BLM will develop a Land Tenure Strategy with the following primary objectives: (1) retain public lands which enhance multiple-use and protect significant resource values, (2) as appropriate, dispose of lands to support local community growth and development needs, (3) as appropriate, dispose or transfer land and mineral estates that are difficult or uneconomic to manage, and (4) acquire lands to complement existing resource values. These goals will be accomplished using a balanced array of land disposal and acquisition management tools such as sales, land exchanges, and other land and mineral conveyances in accordance with policies established by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Federal Land Transaction and Facilitation Act.

*Action: The Arizona BLM will provide the RAC periodic updates on status of land tenure strategy implementation. The RAC will advise and assist BLM during development of implementation actions to assure they support the long*

*term Land Tenure Strategy objectives and that proposed actions will further the public interest, including community growth and access to public lands.*

#### **D. Arizona Recreation Strategy Update**

**As growing numbers of people move to the wide-open spaces of the West, the Arizona BLM faces many challenges in providing quality recreation opportunities while protecting natural resource values. The current Arizona BLM Recreation and Tourism Strategy was developed in 1998 and needs to be updated. In addition, at the national level, BLM has established goals and priorities for recreation and visitor services. An updated Arizona BLM recreation strategy is needed to identify objectives and actions for application and implementation of national BLM goals and priorities within Arizona BLM managed public lands.**

*Action: Advise and assist the BLM in developing content for an Arizona Recreation and Visitor Service Strategy.*

*Action: Advise and assist BLM in developing content for the recreation portion of the Arizona BLM web page.*

*Action: Develop a RAC letter to the Arizona BLM State Director on the importance of public lands for outdoor recreation and the need for a paradigm shift in BLM's view of recreational users.*

#### **E. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Management Strategy Implementation**

**On a national level, the BLM completed the National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands in January, 2001. In 2007 after extensive coordination between the RAC and Arizona BLM staff, the RAC developed and submitted to the Arizona BLM State Director a document titled "Draft Arizona BLM Guidelines for OHV Recreation Management". These proposed OHV guidelines include two sections: the first section addresses OHV guidelines that directly relate to the Arizona BLM rangeland health standards; and the second section addresses a broader and more strategic set of OHV recreation management implementation strategies that are largely derived from the BLM National OHV Strategy and OHV "best practices" adopted by other western states. For 2008, it is appropriate for the RAC and Recreation Work Group (which now includes the former OHV Work Group) to advise and assist BLM with implementation of the proposed OHV guidelines, development of Arizona BLM travel management plans, and resolution of OHV issues that may arise throughout the state, e.g., OHV issues in the Sonoran Desert National Monument.**

*Action: The RAC and Recreation Work Group will advise and assist BLM with implementation of the Draft Arizona BLM Recreation Management Guidelines.*

*Action: During review of land use planning efforts, the RAC and Recreation Work Group will provide comment and feedback on proposed route and OHV area designations and other prescriptions involving OHV use, including recommendations for resolution of public lands access issues. In addition, the RAC and Recreation Work Group will monitor and provide comment on proposed Arizona BLM Travel Management Plans as they are developed.*

*Action: The RAC and Recreation Work Group will advise and assist BLM with resolution of OHV issues that may arise throughout the state.*

#### **F. Implementation of Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act**

The Arizona BLM RAC serves as the Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) for both BLM and Forest Service agencies that manage public lands in Arizona. This role requires the RAC to review agency recreation fee proposals in meetings open to the public and make recommendations to the Secretary regarding (a) the implementation of a standard amenity recreation fee or an expanded amenity recreation fee or the establishment of a specific recreation fee site; (b) the elimination of a standard amenity recreation fee or an expanded amenity recreation fee; or (c) the expansion or limitation of the recreation fee program. The RAC has established a Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Work Group to preview agency fee proposals and facilitate the RRAC's review. In addition, the RAC has adopted a protocol for accomplishing its RRAC responsibilities (including standard operating procedures, guidelines for agency fee proposals, facilitation of public participation, approval process for making recommendations to the Secretary, and record-keeping/accountability requirements) and has established a schedule of fee proposals for review in 2008.

*Action: The RAC will continue to execute its responsibilities assigned by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.*

*Action: The RAC will review and modify as needed its RRAC protocol and the schedule of fee proposals for review in 2008.*

#### **G. Healthy Lands Initiative**

The BLM nationally has embraced land restoration, under the "Healthy Lands Initiative" moniker. This effort has been going on for some time on public lands in Arizona. With the new label, comes a renewed emphasis on larger scale efforts - treatment of a greater number of acres as a single project. Through efforts with partners, such as Arizona Department of Game and Fish, National Resource

Conservation Service (NRCS), and other interest groups and partnerships, BLM is planning landscape-level restoration for the 2009-2012 fiscal years. BLM will be focusing on watersheds that are not in proper functioning condition; areas where they can restore the health of native plants and animals; improve wildlife habitat health, as well as complete hazardous fuels reduction. Areas BLM is considering for projects include: grassland and riparian restoration in the Middle and Upper Gila, tamarisk removal along the Middle Gila, grassland restoration on the Las Cienegas and the San Pedro National Conservation Areas, and restoration projects near Mt. Trumble and Langs Run in the Arizona Strip District.

*Action: The RAC will advise and assist BLM with strategies to foster public support and potential public/private partnerships.*

*Action: Based on its knowledge of local conditions throughout the state, the RAC will assist BLM with identifying restoration projects with near-term high payoff potential.*

#### **H. National Landscape Conservation Foundation**

Established in September 2007, the BLM is working with The National Conservation System Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to support the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) through education, advocacy, partnerships and community groups and private philanthropy. The Foundation will partner with groups to ensure they have the help and resources. They will work with Congress and the BLM whose decisions will shape the future of the NLCS. It will further promote greater public awareness and appreciation of the NLCS and the irreplaceable human and natural history it contains. One of BLM's first priorities is to provide help to establish Friends Groups for the NLCS units in Arizona, i.e., the Friends of the Ironwood Forest National Monument.

*Action: The RAC will advise and assist BLM with strategies to foster greater public awareness and support for the NLCS and BLM's management role, including wider use of volunteers and partnerships and public information opportunities.*

#### **I. Monitoring Wild Horse and Burro (WHB) Management and Adoption Activities**

Aggressive action by BLM has successfully reduced the numbers of wild horses and burros to Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) on BLM lands in Arizona. There have been recent changes in WHB staffing in Arizona and a national reorganization of adoption operations. Arizona BLM must ensure that herd levels do not exceed AMLs in order to minimize impacts to natural resource values. A potential problem is the fact that historically the national WHB

program has not placed adequate emphasis on management of wild burros, which is the primary WHB challenge facing the BLM here in Arizona.

*Action: The RAC will monitor the WHB program and herd levels/AMLs throughout the state and will advise and assist Arizona BLM as needed to maintain WHB program objectives.*

## II. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. Arizona State Director's Report of Statewide Issues and Actions
- B. District/Field Manager Reports
- C. Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Levels
- D. Borderland Management Updates
- E. Trail Development (e.g., Arizona Trail, San Pedro Rail-Trail)
- F. Travel Management Plans
- G. Recreational Shooting Updates
- H. Healthy Lands Initiative Projects
- I. Take It Outside Initiative
- J. Growth Issues and Transportation Planning
- K. BLM Reports on Public Comment Period Business
- L. Energy/Minerals Development and Rights-of-Way Planning
- M. Status of San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area Water Rights
- N. Public Access Issues (e.g., Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness)

## III. 2008 RAC MEETING SCHEDULE \*

### Quarterly Meeting Dates

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December 5 & 6, 2007  
(Phoenix)

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March 5 & 6, 2008  
(Phoenix)

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June 18 & 19, 2008  
(Phoenix)

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September 17 & 18, 2008  
(Phoenix or Prescott)

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**\* Note: All RAC meetings include a scheduled time for public comment opportunity.**

**CERTIFICATION**

**The 2008 Annual Work Plan was adopted by the BLM Arizona Resource Advisory Council on March 6, 2008.**

**//Signed//** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Frances Werner  
Chair, BLM Arizona RAC**