

RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
FINAL MINUTES
March 6, 2008

BLM National Training Center
9828 North 31st Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Frances Werner, Bill Brake, Thomas Kelly, Glendon Collins, Tina Clark, Norman Perry, Linda Kennedy, Linda Binder, Steve Saway, Larry Howery, Laura Pinnas, Jason Williams, Carolyn Loder, Richard Lunt, and Josh Avey (Governor's Rep.)

ABSENT: Jan Holder

BLM STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Elaine Zielinski, Mike Taylor, Deborah Stevens, Joanie Losacco, Becky Heick, Tom Dabbs, Teri Raml, Scott Florence, Bill Gibson, Bill Coulloudon, Bill Grossi, Lorraine Christian, Connie Stone, Kevin Harper, Steve Cohn, Karen Kelleher, Pamela Mathis, Linda Price, and Lynn A. Jackson

PRESENTERS & GUESTS: Jeff Saari and Kathy Makansi, Forest Service, Dan Shein, Arizona State Parks.

AGENDA ITEM: Call to Order by Frances W. Werner, Chairperson

DISCUSSION: The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m.

ACTION: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: Review of December 6, 2007 RAC Meeting Minutes

DISCUSSION: Chair Frances W. Werner asked if there were any changes or additions to the Minutes of the December 6, 2007 RAC meeting. There were none.

ACTION: Motion was made by Richard Lunt to approve the Minutes of the December 6, 2007 RAC Meeting; Seconded by Norman Perry; Minutes were approved without changes. Motion carries.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Director's Update on Legislation, Regulations, And other Statewide Issues by Arizona State Director Elaine Zielinski, the Designated Federal Official

DISCUSSION: Talking Points include:

Welcome Remarks: Welcome to the BLM National Training Center. A special welcome to Bill Brake and Carolyn Loder, who join the RAC for the next three years, but were not able to attend in December. I appreciate your efforts to come to the RAC meetings, despite all your very busy schedules.

Director Caswell: BLM Director James Caswell is being treated for prostate cancer, but will continue to serve as Director.

Personnel Update: Since our last visit, Arizona has had more personnel changes, including several new managers who are coming or are already in place.

Arizona Strip District – **Linda Price** was selected as the Vermilion Cliffs Monument Manager. (Linda has been acting monument manager for several months.)

Gila District – Safford Field Manager **Scott Cooke**. (Replaces Tom Schnell, has been acting in the field manager position. Tom resumes his position in the Safford Field Office as the assistant district manager for resources.)

Gila District – Tucson Field Manager **Brian Bellew**. (Replaces Patrick Madigan who moved to the BLM Rawlins Field Office. **Pam McAlpin**, Arizona Fire Management Officer has been serving as the Acting Tucson Field Manager during the interim.)

Phoenix District – Lower Sonoran Field Manager **Kevin Harper** is leaving BLM and has accepted a job in private industry. His last day is Friday, March 14.

NLCS Alliance Media Tour: The National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) Alliance sponsored a media tour in southern Arizona, February 27 – 29, 2008 to increase awareness of the NLCS and encourage passing legislation to recognize BLM’s national monuments and conservation area. Hosted by the Sonoran Institute, the tour visited the Sonoran Desert and Ironwood Forest national monuments, and Las Cienegas and San Pedro Riparian national conservations area in Arizona. National and local reporters for the LA Times, USA Today, High Country News, Land Letter, Arizona Daily Star, Arizona Republic, Preservation Magazine and a freelance writer were on the tour to see and learn about the on-the-ground management efforts and issues facing the Arizona units.

Outdoor Recreation Village: The BLM was a key partner in the Super Bowl XLII Outdoor Recreation Village held on January 31 - February 3 at Westgate City Center in Glendale, Arizona. The village was within one-quarter mile of the Super Bowl and was created through the efforts of the American Recreation Coalition and national sponsors - Forever Resorts, LLC and Coleman. This venue showcased over 30 partners; more than a dozen state and federal agencies, Wonderful Outdoor World, AmeriCorps, Take Pride in America, USA Freedom Corps and many non-government organizations. Over 3,000 people directly interacted with BLM personnel staffing the joint BLM-Forest Service booth.

In addition, Interior Assistant Secretary Lyle Lavery and Agriculture Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey were at the Outdoor Recreation Village and announced June 14 as national “Get Outdoors” day. The day will focus on events across the country to introduce the public, especially children under the age of 14, to public lands. BLM will highlight its outdoor programs and opportunities through its “Take it Outside” initiative, which will be awarding grants in 2008 for projects to get kids outside and enjoy the outdoors.

Society for Range Management Award: Byron Lambeth, BLM Phoenix District rangeland management specialist was recognized by the Society for Range Management for his excellent work, including grazing compliance, allotment management plan development, rangeland health assessment and grazing permit renewals. Although Byron was unable to attend the Society’s

national convention in Florida in January, he received a plaque and a monetary award to attend training and professional development opportunities. Our congratulations go to Byron.

San Pedro Border Fence Construction: National and local media interest continues to be generated on the border fence construction. Since the REAL I.D. Act was invoked by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the BLM does not have a regulatory role with respect to the border fence construction within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA), and all media calls are being referred to DHS, Border Patrol and Corps of Engineers. The list of laws the REAL I.D. overrides include, both environmental and other land laws. However, we are still having discussions about some of the responsibilities for cultural compliance – the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Solar and Wind Applications: As the population grows, so does the demand for products and services to support this growth, including rights-of ways for renewable energy facilities on public lands. Between 2002 and 2006, applications for wind and solar energy authorizations have jumped from 2 – 3 applications to over 21 (19 solar and 2 wind) applications in 2007. Most of the solar energy applications are in the Colorado River and Phoenix District, and are still in the land use authorization and NEPA process. The two wind farm applications are in the Kingman and Safford Field offices. The environmental assessment for the Dry Lake Wind Energy Project is out for public comment until March 14. However, the environmental assessment for the White Hills Energy Project is just beginning.

Framework Policy Committee: At our last RAC meeting, I mentioned the Regional Framework studies being conducted throughout Arizona. I was asked to be a member of the Framework Policy Committee for this collaborative planning process. The Committee convened on February 13th to meet with the management consultant and kick off this important effort. The Framework Policy Committee includes 36 members from transit organizations, tribal governments, land management agencies, conservation groups, business and community leaders, stakeholders, the Governor's Office and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). The Committee will meet approximately six times throughout an 18-month process to provide policy guidance and information to the citizens, Governor and Legislature.

The Regional Framework Studies will look at ways to plan for growth by strengthening the link between land use, community development and economic patterns of each region, and their interrelated transportation needs for future sustainable mobility and continuing enhancement of Arizona's quality of life. The long-range focus of the studies will identify the state's needs in the 2030-2050 timeframe.

Four regional framework teams, covering eastern, central, northern and western Arizona, will work closely with ADOT, its regional partners, stakeholders, and the public to prepare the studies throughout 2008. From January to April 2009, ADOT, its management consultant, and regional partners will use the information developed in the Regional Framework Studies to create the Statewide Transportation Planning Framework.

RAC Call for Nominations: It's that time of year again! BLM has started its outreach to get nominations for the five positions which will be expiring in August 2008. This year we're looking to fill one position in Commodities, two positions in Non-Commodities, and two positions in Local Area Interests. The information for your consideration has been forwarded to you and posted on the BLM website. In addition, Deborah has brought copies of the nomination forms for anyone who is interested. The deadline for nominations is Monday, April 14, 2008.

Background:

One position is open in category one (Commodity), which includes federal grazing permit, energy and mineral development, timber industry, transportation or rights-of-way, off-highway vehicle use, and commercial recreation interests. Steve Saway's (Off-Highway Vehicle Use) term is up.

Two positions are open in category two (Non-Commodity), which includes nationally or regionally recognized environmental organizations, archaeological and historic interests, dispersed recreation, and wild horse and burro groups. Frances Werner (dispersed recreation) and Glen Collins' (dispersed recreation) terms are up.

Two positions are open in category three (Local Area Interest), which includes holders of State, county or local elected office, Native American Tribes, employees of a State agency responsible for management of natural resources, academicians involved in natural sciences, and the public-at-large. Larry Howery (academicians) and Richard Lunt (elected official) terms are up.

Fire Season Update: Early indicators show that Arizona can expect higher than normal fuel loadings in the Sonoran and upland grassland ecosystems in addition to the intermediate chaparral ecosystem. Climate outlook through March shows increased chances for moisture, which will lead to further loading of light flashy fuels. These higher loadings mean that the majority of BLM Arizona can expect above average fire occurrence in 2008.

BLM is coordinating with the Arizona Department of Transportation to develop an agreement to facilitate increased cooperation during suppression events as well as fire prone right-of-ways adjacent to public lands. In addition, BLM is developing an agreement with the Arizona Forestry Department to allow us to more easily share resources to implement collaborative fuel treatments and improve cooperative administration of the Rural Fire Assistance and Ready Reserve programs.

Experience Arizona: In our efforts to build awareness for public lands and BLM's multiple use programs and mission, we have been working with Arizona Business & Development to feature BLM program highlights in an annual magazine called Experience AZ. The magazine lists the best of Arizona and more than 4,000 things to do in the Grand Canyon State. In the 2008 edition of Experience AZ, I have included a letter highlighting the "Take it Outside" initiative, inviting the public to explore and enjoy the outdoors. There is also comprehensive information on BLM recreation venues and recreational opportunities. The magazine also contains several advertisements for Wild Horse and Burro Adoptions and Fire Prevention. The target audience for this publication is homeowners in Metropolitan Phoenix and recreational businesses, i.e., hotels, motels and tourism information outlets. We have some magazines available for anyone who is interest. They'll be on the handout table.

ACTION: None

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Questions on Field Manager Reports (BLM Field Managers) Field Manager Reports are listed at the end of these minutes.

DISCUSSION: Any questions on Field manager reports.

Solar Energy Applications: There were questions from RAC members and briefing information presented by BLM staff members regarding the Solar Energy applications that are being filed on BLM lands in the Lower Sonoran Field Office area.

Rights of way applications are being prepared for large acreages of BLM land in the deserts of Arizona, southern California and Nevada where solar reflectors would be used to heat water with sunlight to create steam that would be used to generate electricity. Most of the interest in Arizona is in the Gila Bend and Buckeye areas. This is a new land use that is being proposed for BLM lands. Land and water needs, transmission line corridors, hazardous waste, environmental impacts on desert terrain, and Land Use Plan amendments are among the many major issues that BLM will have to deal with. Right of Way applications filed with the BLM for solar generating facilities would require the applicants to pay the costs of processing the applications. In addition to the generation of renewable energy, the rental income from solar energy sites on otherwise unproductive land could be a revenue generator for the federal government. There are major national, State and local policy issues involved in these solar energy proposals.

ACTION ITEM: The Phoenix District Office staff will make a presentation on solar energy applications at the next RAC meeting

Aravaipa Canyon Access: A court hearing on the issue of the gate, that has blocked the access to Aravaipa Canyon, was held in Graham County yesterday (March 5, 2008) before a judge who was brought in from Greenlee County. The gate will remain open until the Judge makes a ruling.

Energy Transmission and Highway Proposals through Black Canyon city Areas: RAC members expressed concerns about the potential impacts of routes for Transwestern Pipeline and I-17 alternative on the Black Canyon Trails Area and the Agua Fria National Monument. BLM is working with both Transwestern Pipeline Company and ADOT to make sure that the public values of the Black Canyon Trails Area and the Agua Fria NM are protected.

Proposed Introduction of the Black Tailed Prairie Dog in the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area: Linda Kennedy and Bill Brake expressed concerns about the proposal by the Arizona Game and Fish Department to reintroduce the Black Tailed Prairie Dog in southern Arizona. They cited the impact that these animals have on vegetation, cattle, equestrian recreationists and other wildlife. Larry Howery pointed out that rangeland health usually declines in black tailed prairie dog areas. They raised the question of why would you want to create a problem that exists in other areas. Mike Taylor pointed out that BLM is just part way through a 12-step process for determining if the reintroduction of the black tailed prairie dog is appropriate.

Status of Uranium Mining claims on the Arizona Strip: Carolyn Loder asked about the status of uranium mining claims on the Arizona Strip. BLM staff reported that there are about 10,000 mining claims. A couple of mines that existed in the 90s are getting ready to reopen. BLM has 15 days to respond when notified of a proposed plan of operation on an unpatented mining claim. Many claims have been filed, but many have no work done on them. BLM has been processing plans of operation doing 20-50 claims at time. Many claims will lapse. This activity is driven by the increased price of uranium.

AGENDA ITEM: Field Office Rangeland Resource Team Member Proposals from BLM Field Managers.

DISCUSSION: The Kingman Field Office has nominated Ingrid Purder and Larry D. Imus to serve on the Kingman Range Resource Team.

ACTION: After discussion a motion was made by Jason Williams to appoint both Larry D. Imus and Ingrid Purder to service on the Kingman Range Resource Team; the motion was seconded by Richard Lunt and approved by the RAC. The motion carries.

Action on the Tucson Rangeland Resource Team was held over until the June meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Presentation to Linda Price

RAC Chairperson Frances W. Werner and S&G Working Group Chairman Larry Howery presented a plaque and letter of appreciation to Linda Price of the Arizona Strip District for her excellent work in implementing the Standards for Rangeland Health and Standards for Grazing Administration on the Arizona Strip.

AGENDA ITEM: Presentation on BLM Route Evaluation and Designation Process by Bill Gibson, BLM Arizona Travel Management Coordinator.

DISCUSSION: Bill Gibson explained and illustrated the Decision Tree Route Evaluation process. Although at first glance it appears complicated, it provides a systematic way of evaluating motorized routes and their impact on land resources, selecting a decision and documenting the results. The process requires that there be a good inventory of routes and information about the resources of the land. The decision tree process is being used increasingly throughout the BLM to evaluate and make decisions on motorized routes. It is an excellent way to arrive at a decision and produces a professional product. A point was made by Steve Saway that the thrust of this tool is to evaluate motorized transportation routes and the process may not necessarily fit those situations where the objective is to plan an OHV recreation area/trail system. Glen Collins reported that the Route Evaluation Tree process had been used successfully by the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership to develop motorized route alternatives, but that the most efficient way to use the process is to use it in-house with BLM staff led by a manager who could make a decision based on the information in the alternatives.

ACTION ITEM: RAC members will be invited to participate in the upcoming Route Evaluation Tree process in the Field Offices.

AGENDA ITEM: Presentation on the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) and Partnership with the NLCS Foundation by Ken Mahoney, BLM Arizona NLCS Coordinator. Ken led a power point presentation which described the National Landscape Conservation System which includes all of the National Monuments, Wilderness areas, National Conservation Areas, ACECs, and other “special areas” that are designated on the BLM lands. Interior Secretary Babbitt had initiated the NLCS. BLM has helped establish a NLCS Foundation to help raise money for maintaining the NLCS. Congress is now considering legislation that would make the NLCS a permanent entity within the BLM.

ACTION ITEM: None

AGENDA ITEM: Presentation on Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI) and Arizona HLI Projects by Bill Grossi, BLM Arizona Wildlife Coordinator

DISCUSSION: Interior Secretary Kempthorne wants to see the HLI implemented by projects on the land which will make a difference on-the-ground, which are based on science, and which have

community support. Arizona BLM is participating by submitting four proposals that meet these criteria. Proposals where funds will be matched from other sources will have the greatest chance of being accepted.

ACTION ITEM: BLM provide the RAC with a more descriptive list of the proposed HLI projects for Arizona.

AGENDA ITEM: Review and Approval of 2008 RAC Annual Work Plan Report

DISCUSSION: There was much discussion of the items in the RAC 2008 Annual work Plan. Members reached agreement with the draft with the understanding that it is a guide for the RAC that shows the public the priorities for the RAC, and what the RAC is focused on in helping guide BLM programs in Arizona. The RAC Annual Work Plan is a living document that can be changed as new issues and priorities arise.

ACTION: Steve Saway made a motion that the Arizona RAC approve the draft 2008 Annual work plan as presented at the March 6, 2008 RAC meeting. Seconded by Richard Lunt. Motion carries.

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period 11:30 a.m.

DISCUSSION: Mr. and Mrs. Eric Barnes, Santa Maria Ranch, Congress, Arizona – Read the following letter to Secretary Kempthorne into the record.

Dear Sir:

I am Erik Barnes. My Wife Tina and I own the Santa Maria Ranch in Yavapai County, Arizona. The ranch includes a 40 acre inholding in the Arrastra Wilderness Area. This 40 acre inholding has been described as the "crown jewel" of the all the wilderness areas managed by the BLM in Arizona.

Sixteen years ago. Without notification, the BLM bulldozed off the road to our property and put up barriers. They told us that the law required they give us access and would give us a permit. In the process of following the "administrative procedures" it took 5 years to get to a "final" decision. With protest from what I call the "Big 4" (National Wildlife Federation, The Wilderness Society, The Sierra Club, and The Audubon Society) it was sent to the IBLA (Interior Board of Land Appeals). It took the IBLA three years to reach a decision. In January of 2000 Sylvia Baca, the Assistant Secretary for Interior, denied that decision. The reason given after 8 years was for "further review".

At this time, we filed a writ of mandamus to require the BLM to follow its own law. Three judges later, one died, one was too busy, a New Hampshire judge ruled that the BLM would have to redo the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement). This was appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. The 9th Circuit Court told us to mediate. During mediation it was agreed that the best solution was for us to sell and either the Government or the Environmental groups to purchase the 40 acres. Mediation fell apart when an attorney for the National Wildlife Federation stated that if he thought the BLM was paying too much for the property he would stop the sale using the NEPA process. The BLM then withdrew its appeal. Currently the BLM has conveniently ignored the judge's order issued four years ago to redo the EIS.

During this process another attorney for the “Big 4” promised to keep us in court another 4 years when or if we win.

Also during this time we have had a pipeline cut in pieces, a well filled with rocks, corrals trashed, fences cut, a bull shot, and signs trashed and miscellaneous vandalism.

The cost for keeping us off our property has been estimated to be in the 3 million dollar category. The cost to the Santa Maria Ranch has been well over 750 thousand dollars. The cost to the BLM is estimated to be well over one million dollars. The cost to the environmental organizations is also estimated at over one million dollars.

The options for solutions are few.

1. We can wait for the “administrative process”. At age 74, I no longer have the time, energy or money to wait.
2. We could file a takings law suit. Again we no longer have the time, energy, or money to wait.
3. The BLM or the Environmental groups could purchase the 40 acres. For us this is a working option.
4. A lease or a lease-purchase is also an option. This option is also a viable for us.

Having done all that we have been asked to do and to have been conveniently ignored whenever possible for sixteen years, our options to stimulate action for a lease or purchase are few. If this last request for help doesn’t produce results, with at the least some serious and sincere negotiations, we plan to resort to trashing the “crown jewel” of the Arrastra Wilderness Area with Graffiti to Stimulate action.

We would really rather not trash our portion of the wilderness area. Please help us find a better way to stimulate positive negotiations.

Thank you,

Erik Barnes

Chairperson Frances W. Werner acknowledged that this was the Barnes’ second appeal for help with this matter. She explained that the RAC does not take sides on this type of issue, the RAC’s role is to advise the BLM on its multiple use programs, and is a jury.

ACTION: Mike Taylor, DSD for Resources, will set up a meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Barnes or conference call to explore other options for them, and he will report back to the RAC on what is being done.

LUNCH BREAK – 12:00 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM: Report of Standards and Guidelines Working Group
Larry Howery, Chair of the S & G Working Group and Bill Coulloudon, BLM Range Management Specialist reviewed the progress on grazing permit renewals, discussed the S&G training needs of new RAC members, and presented “A History of the Arizona BLM Resource

Advisory Council's role in Developing and Implementing Standards for Rangeland health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration". It is a historical report of the development and implementation of the S&Gs since the inception of the RAC.

DISCUSSION: Scheduled S&G training for new RAC members, Josh Avey, Bill Brake, Richard Lunt, Laura Pinnas, Linda Binder on April 11, 2008.

ACTION: Glen Collins made a motion that the report "A History of the Arizona Resource Advisory Council's role in Developing and Implementing the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration" be approved by the RAC; seconded by Norman Perry. Motion carried.

The report will be sent to Arizona State Director Elaine Zielinski.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from the Wild Horse and Burro (WHB) Working Group, Linda Binder, Chair

DISCUSSION: Linda has no formal report to make at this time. She is getting background information and on the Wild Horse and Burro program and will visit the Kingman holding facility. Bill Brake reported that with the new legislation governing the killing of horses, there is no place to take and old horses now. It is becoming an increasing problem for ranchers and horse owners.

ACTION ITEM: BLM will provide an overview of WH&B program to RAC.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from the Recreation Working Group by Norman Perry, Chair

DISCUSSION: The Recreation Working Group had received a presentation on the OHV Ambassadors program and wanted to have this same presentation made at the next meeting to the entire RAC.

A copy of the Guidelines for Recreation Use that had been prepared by the Colorado RAC was distributed to the RAC members and Norman Perry proposed that the Arizona RAC develop a similar set of guidelines for Arizona. After some discussion, the Working Group agreed to assist BLM staff with development of an Arizona BLM Recreation Strategy. Initially, a paper will be prepared (Glen and Steve will work it) to give the RAC's perspective and philosophy on recreation use on public lands. It will go out for review and discussion by the RAC and then be presented to the State Director after it is agreed upon by the RAC.

ACTION: Tina Clark made a motion that Norman Perry replace Tina Clark as Chair of the Recreation Working Group, immediately; Seconded by Carolyn Loder. Motion carried.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Land Use and Tenure Working Group, Glen Collins, Chair

DISCUSSION: The status of Arizona BLM Land Use Plans is described in the March 2008 Update that had been distributed to RAC members.

The Working Group discussed Friends Groups. Friends Groups are not BLM organizations; membership is open to anyone; they provide a mechanism for doing things to help BLM manage areas; they are helpers on the ground, not advocates on public land issues.

There was further discussion of the Black Tailed Prairie Dog introduction issue.

At the December 2007, RAC meeting, State Director Elaine Zielinski had asked the RAC to suggest things BLM could do to become “better known” by the public in the urban areas of Arizona. The Working Group brainstormed the following ideas which were reported to her in this RAC meeting:

- Adopt-A-Critter – *(Glen could you clarify for the final minutes?)*
- Educate the public through such means as public service messages on TV and radio and distribute information about BLM with city water bills.
- Get information about the history and presence of the “public domain” and the BLM included in school curriculums.
- Take school children on field trips to public land areas.
- Get BLM information onto “My Space” and other web-sites.
- Re-structure the BLM web-site so that BLM lands “come up” when people search Google and other search engines for information about hiking, camping, touring, and other outdoor activities.
- Have BLM managers meet with State and local government leaders.
- Have BLM managers get to know new people by meeting with leaders of civic organizations other than the traditional group of natural resource and environmental organizations BLM is in contact with.
- Develop slogans that focus on the ethics of using the BLM lands, i.e., “Keep BLM Beautiful.”
- Put distinctive names of blocks of BLM lands to give the BLM lands an identity and help the public “connect” with the BLM and the BLM lands.
- If it isn't broke, why try to fix it. Becoming better known will bring more people to the BLM public lands with more impacts on the lands and resources. Decide what you want to have happen before you take action.

ACTION ITEM: Arizona Game and Fish Department will make a presentation on the Black Tailed Prairie Dog to the RAC Working Group.

AGENDA ITEM: RRAC Session - see separate RRAC minutes.

AGENDA ITEM: Discussion on Future Meeting/Locations by BLM State Director and RAC Members

DISCUSSION: The next RAC Meeting will be held Wednesday and Thursday, June 18 and 19, 2008 in Prescott or Phoenix (at BLM NTC, if in Phoenix).

Other 2008 Meetings:

Field trip to SDNM on April 10

REA Work Group teleconference meeting: July, 2008. Deb to set up Conference Call after date and time is firmed up.

RAC meeting:

September 17/18 at Prescott or Phoenix

ACTION ITEM: Agenda items to include at the next upcoming meeting: SDNM RMP Plan briefing to RAC after the working group meeting in June, update on Sonoran Parkway, update on the Prairie dogs?, OHV Ambassador program, WH&B program overview, and update on Solar Energy Applications.

MEETING ADJOURNED: Meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m. Motion made by Norman Perry and Seconded by Steve Saway.

Arizona Resource Advisory Council Meeting District/Field Manager Report

1. SUBJECT: Arizona Strip RMP Records of Decision signed

ISSUE SUMMARY: The State Director signed the RMP Records of Decision for Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, Grand Canyon – Parashant National Monument and the Arizona Strip Field Office on January 29. The plans are expected to be printed and available to the public by early March.

2. SUBJECT: New Monument Managers

ISSUE SUMMARY: Linda Price was recently selected as the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument Manager (she has been Acting Monument Manager for over two years). The Grand Canyon – Parashant National Monument Manager is expected to be announced soon and should enter on duty in April.

3. SUBJECT: Lake Powell pipeline project

ISSUE SUMMARY: The proposed southern routes for a controversial 130-mile long pipeline project that will carry water from Lake Powell to communities in southwestern Utah would cross through BLM lands on the Arizona Strip. One preliminary proposed route would follow an electrical transmission line and another along Highway 389. BLM will be one of the cooperating agencies on the project and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may become the lead agency in relation to the hydropower generation component of the project. The Washington Office has appointed a BLM Project Manager (Joe Incardine who works out of the Utah State Office).

4. SUBJECT: SUBJECT: Proposed Arvada land sale

ISSUE SUMMARY: Two parcels of land near Mesquite Nevada (120 acres) are being considered for competitive sale under the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) authority. One parcel bordering a golf course contains an isolated population of desert tortoises which would require relocation. The Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) officials have participated in field tours of the proposed sale parcel and relocation site in the Beaver Dam ACEC. The environmental assessment for the sale was issued for a 30-day public review beginning in mid-February. Proceeds from these sales go into a statewide interagency fund for acquisitions within specially designated areas in Arizona. Some of the proceeds would also be utilized to assist with tortoise relocation costs.

5. SUBJECT: Uranium exploration

ISSUE SUMMARY: The staking of mining claims and exploration for uranium on the Arizona Strip Field Office continues. The spot price of uranium as of January 28, 2008, was \$78/lb, down from a high of \$135/lb in June, 2007. Since 2004 more than 10,000 mining claims have been located, and the FO has processed 57 notices for hundreds of exploratory drill holes. One plan of operations for drilling in Kanab Creek has been submitted and an environmental assessment is

currently being revised. Three existing uranium mines on the Arizona Strip: Kanab North, Arizona #1 and Pinenut have been in standby status and are currently authorized under BLM mining plans of operations. Denison Mines Corp. is preparing the Arizona #1 mine to resume operations in 2008. An updated reclamation performance bond is under review before operations can resume.

4. SUBJECT: Pakoon Springs rehabilitation project

ISSUE SUMMARY: Work on the Pakoon Springs restoration project started in January with digging test pits, collecting soil samples and completing fencing projects. Pakoon Springs Ranch was privately owned until 2002 when the BLM accepted title to 240 acres through a donation from The Conservation Fund. For nearly a century the springs have been developed and modified to provide water for livestock, agricultural irrigation and domestic use. Many non-native plants and animals were introduced. Water on the Arizona Strip is a scarce resource and Pakoon Springs are the largest in Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. Rehabilitation to a more natural riparian habitat and hillside seep will require re-contouring the agricultural fields, removal of all berms, water impoundments and non-native species.

7. SUBJECT: BLM events and partnership activities

ISSUE SUMMARY: BLM has participated in a variety of educational activities, field tours and events including:

- Retired BLM employee and current volunteer Bob Davis received a Take Pride in America award at the BLM Executive Leadership Team meeting in Phoenix on January 23.

- BLM participated in the 5th annual St. George Winter Bird Festival on January 24 -27.

- Staff escorted Kaibab Paiute tribal officials on a field trip to various sites in the Grand- Canyon Parashant National Monument. The group visited Tasssi Springs and the Pakoon Springs restoration project on February 11.

- Rhino Rally 2007 was held on February 23 with 300 motorcycles and thousands of spectators participating in the popular event sponsored by the local Wizards Motorcycle Club.

- The popular lunchtime "Brown Bag" lecture series is held each Friday afternoon through April. The programs feature a variety of land management topics.

- Dennis Curtis, Tom Folks and Ken Moore retired on January 3 with a collective 109 years of BLM experience.

Phoenix District

Hassayampa Field Office

1. SUBJECT: BLM, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) coordinate regarding Interstate-17 improvement study and Sunset Point Rest Area closure

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Hassayampa Field Office is coordinating with ADOT in its development of technical and environmental studies of alternatives for the improvement of Interstate 17 between New River and Cordes Junction. ADOT conducted public scoping meetings in 2006 to solicit comments on nine preliminary alternatives, including two routes through the Agua Fria National Monument. In May 2007, ADOT published a Draft Alternative Selection Report that identified three of the alternatives for further study. The alternatives through the monument were eliminated from consideration. Local residents have expressed

opposition to an alternative route through the Bumble Bee valley below Sunset Point. ADOT plans to conduct additional public meetings in the spring or summer of 2008.

The Sunset Point rest area is closed for renovations through November 2008. The BLM is working with ADOT engineers to mitigate any related impacts to nearby public lands, including the Agua Fria National Monument access points at Badger Springs, Sunset, and Bloody Basin Roads. In February 2008, ADOT and the BLM will install white-letter-on-brown signs for the three interchanges that read "Not A Rest Area / Your Public Lands" on the west of I-17, or "Not A Rest Area / Agua Fria National Monument" on the east. ADOT has conducted several cleanups of the immediate I-17 access areas. BLM, the Department of Public Safety, Yavapai Sheriffs, and ADOT will continue to patrol the immediate areas of public land near the I-17 access points. If impacts develop, ADOT has agreed to work with BLM to mitigate them.

2. SUBJECT: Hassayampa Field Office and Agua Fria National Monument selected to pilot visitor survey program

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Hassayampa Field Office and the Agua Fria National Monument have been selected to participate in the BLM's pilot test of the Forest Service's National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) program beginning in April 2008. The BLM's Prineville and Taos Field Offices are also participating. The BLM is piloting the Forest Service's system to gather information about the amount and type of recreation use that occurs on every national forest and grassland in the Forest system. NVUM consists of collecting traffic counts and interviews of visitors as they are leaving recreation sites and public land areas. The information collected is used to estimate total visitation for a forest and to describe the characteristics of visitors including demographics, activity participation, satisfaction, and economics. The Hassayampa Field Office and monument were selected as the urban interface area for the pilot program.

3. SUBJECT: Update on the Proposed Resource Management Plans and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Agua Fria National Monument and Bradshaw-Harquahala planning areas

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Hassayampa Field Office has completed its final revision of the Proposed Resource Management Plans and Final Environmental Impact Statement for public lands within the Agua Fria National Monument and the Bradshaw-Harquahala Planning Area. Following recent Bureau policy, the document was reviewed and cleared by the Interior Solicitor. Final editing and formatting of the document will be completed in February, and the document will be sent to the printer with expected publication in March or April 2008.

4. SUBJECT: Progress on the route evaluation and designation process

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Hassayampa Field Office has completed detailed evaluations of 1,000 miles of previously inventoried motorized routes, in order to complete the route designation process for public lands in the Black Canyon Corridor west of Interstate 17, the Lake Pleasant and Hieroglyphic Mountains areas north of State Route 74, and the Wickenburg Mountains east of Highway 93 and north of State Route 74. The ultimate goal of this evaluation and designation process is to create a managed network of roads and trails within the field office that will be available to a variety of users while limiting impacts to the resources. Initial public scoping began in 2007 and several meetings were held to afford interested agencies, organizations and individuals the opportunity to participate in the process and provide input to the route designation process. Comments received at these meetings have been used to produce preliminary route designation alternative maps which are now being made available to the public for review. Three maps have been created to provide a range of preliminary alternatives for consideration. On February 15, 2008, these maps were made available for public review on the Arizona BLM

website at http://www.blm.gov/az/outrec/travel_mgmt/index.htm. These maps and more detailed versions are also available to the public at the BLM Phoenix District office.

5. SUBJECT: Black Canyon Trail dedication

ISSUE SUMMARY: On February 9, 2008, a dedication ceremony and celebration welcomed outdoor recreation enthusiasts to the Black Canyon Trail's new Skyline Trail segment near Black Canyon City. Speakers at the ceremony included Helen Hankins, BLM Associate State Director; Tom Thurman, Yavapai County Supervisor; and Andy Kunasek, Maricopa County Supervisor. The trailhead is the third public entry point for the Black Canyon Trail system. Working on this segment since 2005, this completed the southern portion of the 62 mile Black Canyon Trail system, which stretches from as far south as the Carefree Highway area north to the base of the Prescott National Forest. The successful completion of the trail segment was made possible by volunteers representing the Black Canyon Trail Coalition, International Mountain Bicycling Association, the Mountain Bike Association of Arizona, Arizona State Horseman's Association and the Black Canyon City Riders.

6. SUBJECT: Legal decision in the New West mineral material trespass case in favor of the BLM

ISSUE SUMMARY: On January 7, 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court denied a petition by New West Materials LLC/Vulcan Materials Company to review a District Court decision affirmed by the U.S. Court of Appeals Fourth Circuit, that the mineral materials in a patent granted under the Small Tract Act belong to the United States. The BLM had contested the removal of sand and gravel from the mining operation near Phoenix in 2002. Pending a final court decision, the company removed minerals under an agreement with the BLM and made payments into escrow and bond accounts. The Hassayampa Field Office will receive those funds to provide for the repair of damaged lands and resources.

7. SUBJECT: BLM issues rights-of-way for Transwestern Pipeline expansion

ISSUE SUMMARY: On January 24, 2008, the Phoenix District issued right-of-way authorizations to the Transwestern Pipeline Company for the Transwestern Phoenix Expansion Project. The project consists of a 255.2-mile gas pipeline, termed the Phoenix Lateral, to be constructed from Transwestern's mainline in the vicinity of Ash Fork in Yavapai County, through Yavapai and Maricopa Counties, to Casa Grande in Pinal County. The pipeline route passes through lands administered by the Hassayampa and Lower Sonoran Field Offices. Archaeological data recovery is currently in progress. On February 14, 2008, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Transwestern Pipeline Company conducted a training session for agency staff and contractors on implementing the Plan of Development and its procedures for environmental monitoring and compliance during construction and reclamation.

Agua Fria National Monument

1. SUBJECT: Agua Fria National Monument Hosts Arizona Archaeology and Heritage Awareness Month Tour March 8, 2008

ISSUE SUMMARY: On Saturday, March 8, 2008, BLM and the Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument will host a public interpretive hike to the monument's Richinbar Pueblo as part of Arizona Archaeology and Heritage Awareness Month. Attendance is limited and participants must make a reservation with the BLM ahead of time.

2. SUBJECT: Monument to be Featured in 2008 Issue of Audubon Magazine

ISSUE SUMMARY: In April 2007, Agua Fria National Monument staff (Connie Stone and Rem Hawes) and ASU researcher Hoski Schaafsma visited the newly discovered archaeological

features on the monument with Keith Kloor, senior editor of Audubon Magazine. Mr. Kloor is writing an article about the pioneering ASU interdisciplinary research project called "Legacies on the Landscape" focused on the ecology and archaeology of the monument. The article is expected to be featured in the March 2008 issue of Audubon Magazine.

3. SUBJECT: Training Session Draws 70 Volunteers and Partners for Agua Fria River Mapping Project

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Agua Fria River in the BLM's Agua Fria National Monument will be the subject of a water mapping project conducted by volunteers in 2008. More than 70 volunteers, interested citizens, land owners, decision makers, and scientists attended the training session held on February 5, 2008, at the Chauncey Ranch YMCA in Mayer, Arizona, to learn more about flows in the Agua Fria River and how to map the presence or absence of water. On June 21, 2008 (the third Saturday of the month, which is statistically the driest day of the year) teams of scientists and volunteers will walk the river to map where the Agua Fria River flows and where it doesn't in and upstream of the monument. Using GPS technology, they will help develop a long term database to understand flows and trends on the river. Participants also included BLM grazing permittees, and landowners adjacent to the monument. Based on the successful efforts at the BLM San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, the Arizona Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) presented the session in cooperation with the BLM, Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument, Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership, Arcosanti, and Prescott College.

4. SUBJECT: Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument begin interpretation plan for historic Teskey homestead site

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Friends' Cultural Resource Team received training in gathering oral history and began conducting interviews with individuals with long-time ties to the Agua Fria National Monument area. This initial work will lead to development of an interpretive plan and signing for the Teskey homestead site, an area of the monument that has been impacted by vandalism and illegal dumping. The BLM, Friends of the AFNM, and members of the Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership will develop interpretative signing and materials related to the historic homestead area to increase appreciation and protection of the area.

5. SUBJECT: Verde Valley Birding Festival

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Agua Fria National Monument will host a public bird habitat tour on the Agua Fria River, Friday, April 25, as part of the Arizona Verde Valley Birding Festival. Reservations are required. Contact: Cottonwood Chamber of Commerce, 1010 S. Main Street, Cottonwood, AZ 86326, www.birdyverde.org.

6. SUBJECT: Prescribed Fire Continues Central Arizona Grasslands Restoration

ISSUE SUMMARY: On January 21, 2008, the BLM carried out a successful 100-acre prescribed fire project on Sycamore Mesa in the Agua Fria National Monument. The purpose of the prescribed burn was to thin woody vegetation that, due to decades of fire suppression, has encroached on the central Arizona grassland area. The BLM, Tonto and Prescott National Forests, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department are working cooperatively to enhance the central Arizona grasslands, and this prescribed burn was the latest in the BLM's efforts to restore the native grasslands and corridors for wildlife migration.

7. SUBJECT: Agua Fria National Monument Hosts Archaeology Tour

ISSUE SUMMARY: On January 3, 2008, the Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument lead a tour of the monument's Arrastre Creek archaeological site for two Phoenix area chapters of the Arizona Archaeological Society (AAS). Visitors from the AAS Desert Foothills and Agua Fria

chapters toured the Arrastre Creek site, which features prehistoric petroglyphs, the type of rock art produced by pecking images into the surfaces of rock outcrops and boulders. Volunteers from both AAS chapters have been involved in documenting rock art at the site using traditional, labor-intensive recording methods, as well as a computerized digital photography analysis method. They are determining how useful it is to take various measurements directly from the photographs. The tour helped volunteers from both chapters monitor, record, and assist with interpretation of the monument's archaeological resources.

8. SUBJECT: Agua Fria National Monument Hosts DOI Official

ISSUE SUMMARY: On January 24, 2008, BLM staff provided a tour for Olivia Ferriter, DOI Director of Conservation, Partnerships, and Management Policy to view areas and meet with representatives of partnership groups involved in caring for BLM public lands in the Black Canyon corridor and Agua Fria National Monument north of Phoenix. Ferriter toured the Black Canyon Trail and met with a representative of the Black Canyon Trail Coalition partner group, which is constructing the Trail. Ferriter met with representatives of the Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument to get input regarding partnering with DOI agencies. The group also toured the Agua Fria River area where a new group of BLM volunteers are leading the effort to cleanup, prevent illegal dumping, and illegal off-highway vehicle use off-road and in the River. Other sites included the prehistoric River Bend petroglyph site, the newest Arizona Site Steward-monitored site in the monument, the Horseshoe Ranch, and Pueblo la Plata ruin. The group also visited the Black Canyon Heritage Park, in which BLM is partnering with the community, and state and federal agencies to develop a visitor center and museum located in Black Canyon City, Arizona.

Lower Sonoran Field Office

1. Subject: OHV Ambassador Program and Small Projects

ISSUE SUMMARY: Chris Gammage was recently selected for the OHV Ambassador Coordinator position. He will also work closely with our partner, Arizona State Parks. Chris will coordinate peer patrols, trail maintenance and resource restoration projects with various agencies around the central Arizona area. He will also be responsible for providing information and training to OHV Dealers in the Phoenix metro area. Other good news includes our being awarded funding for several small OHV projects with the Arizona State Parks. These projects will go a long way in assisting us in better OHV recreation management of the Buckeye Hills East and West areas. The projects will include signage, environmental education, and route maintenance work.

2. Subject: SCA Volunteer and Partnership Coordinator

ISSUE SUMMARY: Mary Williams continues to bring fresh ideas to our environmental education efforts in the Phoenix metro area and surrounding communities. As you know from the previous report in December 2007, Mary is a volunteer with the Student Conservation Association. She continues to work with Gila Bend, Maricopa, Ajo, Goodyear, and Buckeye in providing information concerning wildlife, habitat, recreation opportunities, etc. Due to her efforts we have been able to reach several thousand members of the public and provide them with useful information about the Sonoran Desert.

3. Subject: Buckeye Hills West OHV Management

ISSUE SUMMARY: The LSFO is currently working in partnership with Maricopa County Parks to better manage OHV recreation in the Buckeye Hills West area. They currently manage a 7000 acre park that was authorized in the late 1960s. Maricopa County Parks and LSFO will be applying for funding through the Arizona State Parks Motorized RTP grant in late March. The

grant would be used to secure funding for the development of staging areas and for planning support to further develop the region for motorized recreation. Trying to find an area that is both close to population centers and well-suited for motorized recreation, given the PM-10 non-attainment areas in Maricopa County, has been difficult. It is our hope that this will provide a good location for all ages interested in motorized recreation as well as benefit wildlife and habitat as well as other uses on the public land.

4. Subject: Solar Field Applications

ISSUE SUMMARY: Currently, the LSFO has 4 major ROW applications for solar fields. Each project would consume 5000 to 7000 acres of public land and would produce 500Mw to 1.25Mw once all phases are completed. Applications include solar thermal and photovoltaic technology. Some projects will require a small gas plant to be built to maintain necessary energy production during cloudy days or in summer months when energy demand peaks. Current proposed projects are located in the Buckeye Hills East area, Saddle Mountain, Gila Bend, and Ajo. There are also an additional 4 applications in the HFO.

5. Subject: Sonoran Parkway Project

ISSUE SUMMARY: In February 2008, the LSFO received a revised application from the City of Goodyear for a 2 to 6 lane road to be constructed from Goodyear at I-10 through Rainbow Valley near the eastern boundary of the Monument through the proposed master planned community of Amaranth. The terminus of the proposed road would be Hwy. 238. The purpose of the road is to provide necessary public services to communities in Rainbow Valley as well as provide connection between Maricopa, the future community of Amaranth and the City of Goodyear. It is projected that Amaranth will be home to 250,000 residents by 2015/2020. Public scoping meetings will be conducted to involve communities in the planning and NEPA process.

Sonoran Desert National Monument

1. SUBJECT: Butterfield Project

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Butterfield area and lands around the North Maricopa Wilderness Area have been significantly damaged by illegal vehicle use off of the road system. In response, BLM has proposed a three part plan to address the issue: 1. Close the area to motorized vehicle entry to stop any further damage; 2. Rehabilitate areas damaged using techniques proven over the last several years in rehabilitating border and recreation damage; 3. Develop and implement a plan to manage recreation use in the area to avoid future damage. The Federal Register Notice for the Butterfield area closure is currently in the Washington Office for review and publication. At the last RAC, we were hoping to have the Notice published in January. We are nearing completion of the draft alternatives for the restoration and management plan and will be putting them on the web site and inviting public input. We are also working on grant proposals to State Parks for funding of the restoration and management plan. Based on the receipt of BLM and grant funds, implementation of the restoration and management plan will occur over the next 2-3 years, with staged re-opening of areas as the rehabilitation and plan implementation are completed.

2. SUBJECT: Annual Border Rehabilitation Work Continues

ISSUE SUMMARY: As in past years, SDNM is the recipient of Southern Arizona Project funding to help repair damage done by illegal border traffic. Border related damage includes immigrants leaving tons of trash, 100s of bicycles and vehicles, and creating miles of new illegal vehicle tracks. Each year, we bring on Student Conservation Association Interns to rehabilitate the damaged areas. This year we have focused specifically on rehabilitation of off-road vehicle

tracks. With the rain we have been having, these areas can recover quickly with little evidence of long-term damage.

3. SUBJECT: Ephemeral Grazing on SDNM

ISSUE SUMMARY: Because of all of the rain, we are receiving numerous requests for ephemeral grazing on the SDNM. With help from the Hassayampa Field Office range management specialist, we are working hard to assess and authorize appropriate ephemeral grazing. Due to the long-term drought, we are concerned about potential impacts on perennial vegetation and the long-term recovery of the range. We are working closely with the permittees to monitor the allotments to ensure that the SDNM resources are appropriately protected.

4. SUBJECT: Anza National Historic Trail

ISSUE SUMMARY: Cheryl Blanchard, SDNM Archeologist, recently returned from a week in Washington D.C. where she represented Arizona as the Anza National Historic Trail Coordinator during “Hike the Hill” week. Many non-governmental organizations converged on D.C. to advocate for trails with Congress. The BLM Trails program takes advantage of their presence by bringing together BLM trail coordinators from across the nation to discuss the National Trail program and meet with these non-governmental organizations.

Gila District

Safford and Tucson Field Offices

1. SUBJECT: Reintroduction of Black-tailed Prairie Dogs to the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Arizona Game and Fish Department, is proposing to reintroduce black-tailed prairie dogs within the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (LCNCA). The AGFD has completed eight of the 12 steps in its process for reintroducing species, and has prepared a Draft Reintroduction Plan. The LCNCA Resource Management Plan provides for the reintroduction of this species, which was analyzed in its EIS. A site-specific NEPA analysis of the proposal is underway at the Tucson Field Office. The proposal has the support of the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership, which assisted with the development of the RMP. The grazing permittee, Mac Donaldson, has expressed support for the reintroduction. The Arizona Game and Fish Department held a public meeting on February 21st in Sonoita to discuss the proposal.

2. SUBJECT: Dry Lake Wind Project

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Safford Field Office released the Environmental Assessment and unsigned Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Dry Lake Wind Project on February 12. The EA analyzed PPM Energy’s application to construct, operate, and maintain a wind generation facility in Navajo County, north-northwest of the Town of Snowflake and southwest of the I-40 corridor. Phase 1 would include up to 43 turbines; subsequent phases could bring the total up to 209 turbines. Public comments will be accepted until March 14. The EA is available on the BLM website at <http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/info/nepa/drylake.html>

3. SUBJECT: Saginaw Hill Hazardous Materials Cleanup

ISSUE SUMMARY: Phase I of the Saginaw Hill cleanup project was completed on January 24. Approximately 5,600 cubic yards of contaminated soils were removed from the onsite arroyo and from two waste piles that have high levels of arsenic and lead. These materials were placed at the repository site, which will be constructed in a second phase. Filter fabric and rock was installed in the excavated portions of the arroyo, which was the main pathway for transport of contaminated soils off-site.

The project was completed within budget, and on schedule. Phase II funding has been approved by the Department of the Interior, and requests for quotations will be advertised within 30 days. Construction of Phase II is slated to begin in May 2008, and will be completed within six months. Upon completion of Phase II, the BLM will continue quarterly sampling of its nine water quality monitoring wells. The sampling effort will provide the BLM with data relative to the performance of the repository. Once the cleanup is complete, the site will be reevaluated to determine if the fence can be removed or whether Pima County Park and Recreation still has an interest in the site as an outdoor park.

4. SUBJECT: Aravaipa-Klondyke Road Closure

ISSUE SUMMARY: A gate installed by a private landowner that has blocked access to the east entrance of Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness for more than two years was ordered to be opened by Greenlee County Superior Court Judge Monica Stauffer on November 30. Later, at a December 17 preliminary injunction hearing, Judge Stauffer ordered the gate to remain open to public access throughout the duration of a lawsuit brought by private landowners in the Klondyke area. The lawsuit was based, in part, on more than 100 years of records, presented by the BLM, Forest Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department to the Graham County Board of Supervisors, showing the road to be a public highway. Following that ruling, the Safford Field Office began issuing wilderness permits for the east end but has since suspended them due to recent rainstorms that severely damaged the road. It is currently only passable by all-terrain vehicle. A trial is set for March 5.

5. SUBJECT: Ironwood Forest National Monument Resource Management Plan

ISSUE SUMMARY: Publication of the Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement for the Ironwood Forest National Monument has been on hold for several months while the Tucson Field Office conducts an intensive review of recreational shooting issues within the Monument. The review is being conducted in response to the large number of comments that were received to the Draft RMP regarding the issue of whether or not recreational shooting was an appropriate activity on public lands within the Monument.

6. SUBJECT: Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Draft Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan and Environmental Assessment will likely go to the publisher in late March. Release of the plan will be followed by a 90-day comment period and a series of public meetings. The plan is a collaborative effort involving the BLM Safford Field Office, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and The Nature Conservancy.

7. SUBJECT: International Migratory Bird Day and 20th Anniversary of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Tucson Field Office plans to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, which was designated through Congressional legislation on November 11, 1988. The event will be held in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day on May 10, 2008, an interagency event held yearly at the BLM's San Pedro House. Planning for the celebration is underway.

8. SUBJECT: National Single-Engine Air Tanker Academy in Safford

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Aerial Firefighting Institute hosted by the National Interagency Fire Center is set to begin on March 10. The training brings single-engine air tanker (SEAT) pilots, who will likely assist with fire suppression throughout the nation, to Arizona for a series of

classroom and aerial exercises. The annual workshop is held at the Gila District's Air Operations Center in Safford.

9. SUBJECT: Gila District Fire Program Receives National Award

ISSUE SUMMARY: The BLM's National Fire and Aviation Office presented the National Excellence in Ecosystem Management Award to the Gila District, the first time this national award has been presented in Arizona. The District's fire program was recognized for its efforts to restore natural ignition fire to the landscape for resource benefit as part of its Wildland Fire Use (WFU) program. The success of this effort is the result of collaboration between the Safford Field Office, Gila District Office, Arizona State Office, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). As compared to other agencies that have WFU plans, the Gila District's planning effort consulted with the USFWS from the beginning of its planning process in order to avoid emergency consultation during a WFU event. The ability and authority to plan for and apply WFU to the landscape was made possible through the 2004 Arizona Statewide Land Use Plan Amendment for Fire, Fuels and Air Quality Management and the Biological and Conference Opinion for that document. Wildland Fire Use management areas include BLM-managed lands in the Santa Teresa Mountains, Turtle Mountain, Peloncillo and Whitlock mountains, and Guadalupe Canyon. Planning efforts were initiated about three years ago.

10. SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Continues

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Safford Field Office hosted a public meeting to initiate its transportation planning process on November 27. Initial efforts will focus on the Gila Box and surrounding area, with the end result being a transportation plan that will be incorporated into a future Resource Management Plan. The meeting presented the current routes in terms of several criteria type of route, access needs, current uses, and special resources that may be affected. A good cross-section of the public, including representatives from the Graham County Board of Supervisors, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Gila Valley 4x4 Club, and Sky Island Alliance, participated. The SFO is now implementing the route evaluation tree process to analyze roads within the planning area.

11. SUBJECT: Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival

ISSUE SUMMARY: The 15th annual Wings Over Willcox Birding and Nature Festival brought hundreds of birders to southeastern Arizona from January 16 through January 20. Twenty tours were sold out in advance with participants traveling from at least 22 states and two Canadian provinces. The festival was capped off with a record high of 36,418 Sandhill Cranes, nearly 5,000 more cranes than the previous high in 2004. The BLM has been a partner in the festival since its inception.

12. SUBJECT: Birding Project Gets National Award

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Southeastern Arizona Birding Trail Map Guide was honored at the 2007 National Association for Interpretation workshop in November. The Silver Award was presented by BLM National Landscape Conservation System Director Elena Daly at the weeklong conference in Wichita, Kansas. Two California projects and one New Mexico project were also recognized.

**Colorado River District
Kingman Field Office**

1. SUBJECT: Crozier Canyon Allotment

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Kingman Field Office (KFO) issued a Proposed Decision in March 2007 pertaining to the issuance of a 10-year grazing permit for the Crozier Canyon Allotment. The permittee for the Crozier Canyon Allotment protested the Proposed Decision. The rancher asked that the Assistant Field Manager review all provided documents and tour the Crozier ranch before making a final decision. All documents provided were reviewed and field visits conducted in August and October 2007. A Final Decision was issued in December 2007 and was not appealed. The permit was mailed out on February 29th.

BLM has drilled two wells near Wright Creek to support the implementation of the grazing strategy outlined in the evaluation. BLM will continue to work closely with the rancher on other projects such as fences and a pipeline needed to implement the grazing strategy for this ranch.

2. SUBJECT: Ephemeral Grazing

ISSUE SUMMARY: The rains over the winter have produced abundant growth of annual grasses and forbs. Ephemeral grazing permits for Hibernia, La Cienega, and Walnut Creek allotments have been issued. The ranchers on these allotments can take the opportunity to make use of this ephemeral forage.

3. SUBJECT: Wind Energy

ISSUE SUMMARY: BP Wind Energy North America, Inc. submitted an application for a Wind Energy facility located in the White Hills approximately 45 miles north of Kingman, AZ. The proposed project includes up to 330 wind turbines with expected generation of 500 Megawatts. The turbine rotors are expected to be three-bladed with a rotor diameter of 60 to 100 meters mounted on a tubular tower approximately 70-100 meters high. The Environmental Assessment will address impacts to wildlife, grazing, vegetation, visual resources, cultural resources, etc. The Plan of Development and analysis for the project is being prepared within the guidance from BLM's "Wind Energy Development Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement".

Lake Havasu Field Office

1. SUBJECT: Lease and Use of Parker Strip Recreation Area Rock House Area by San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office (SBSO)

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Lake Havasu Field Office (LHFO) is in discussion with SBSO regarding the Sheriff's request for an Intergovernmental Agreement with BLM to lease and develop the Rock House Visitor area along Parker Dam Road in California. The SBSO would like to enhance the marine enforcement efforts along the Parker Strip by use of the existing launch ramp, dock, and office building. In addition, SBSO would like to establish a Sheriff's Resident Post at the site, placing three to five mobile homes, a multi-bay boat storage garage, and training center. The development is directly across Parker Dam Road from the County's fire station on about two acres of public land leased from BLM. Currently SBSO operates law enforcement offices and housing upriver near Parker Dam, approximately nine miles from the Rock House site. Providing public safety facilities at the requested site would greatly enhance law enforcement efforts by locating them closer to the more populated resorts and recreation facilities along the Parker Strip. BLM is currently reviewing the Resource Management Plan (RMP) to determine land use commitments for the areas under consideration.

2. SUBJECT: Implementation of the Travel Management Plan

ISSUE SUMMARY: LHFO Travel Management Plan (TMP) will evaluate and designate all individual routes/trails for use within the planning area's six units, designating for Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use as "Limited" (an estimated 1,213,444) acres unless specified elsewhere in the Approved RMP. The first unit, Bullhead, is now in draft form and expected to be online for

public review and comment by March 1. A TMP Interdisciplinary team evaluates each individual route, using the outlined process, using specialists in wildlife, cultural, recreation, lands, wilderness and other interests. The schedule for completion of all units is intended to be accomplished within five years, with support from BLM partners, available staffing, WO priorities, and available funding.

3. SUBJECT: Invasion of Quagga Mussels in Lake Havasu

ISSUE SUMMARY: Invasive quagga mussels were first discovered in our area one year ago. It is projected that as the infestation sets in at Hoover Dam with pipes becoming plugged with quagga colonies, the clogged hydroelectric power operations maintenance and control costs there could reach over \$1 million a year. The tiny quagga mussels are also thriving at Davis and Parker dams and along the Colorado River. At Lake Havasu, infestations have been found on underwater structures and buoy lines, as well as on marina facilities and watercraft docked at the facilities. With our warm year-round temperatures, quaggas are able to reproduce six times a year, whereas colder climates witnessed only two cycles per year since the mid-1980s in the Great Lakes Region. Estimates are that one quagga can multiply to as many as one million within five years. While there is yet to be a remedy developed to stop the invasion or reproduction of quaggas, BLM Lake Havasu is working with other Federal, state, and local agencies to provide a public awareness campaign of the situation, and to inform boaters of the potential damage the quaggas can cause to marine engines and equipment. As more research becomes available, the public will also be informed of the effects of quaggas on aquatic species and other marine life.

Yuma Field Office

1. SUBJECT: La Posa Travel Management Plan

ISSUE SUMMARY: The BLM Yuma Field Office is in the preliminary stages of developing the La Posa Travel Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. The La Posa Travel Management Area encompasses over 340,000 acres of public lands in La Paz and Yuma counties and includes over 1,700 miles of inventoried roads, primitive roads, trails, and other linear features. The plan will systematically evaluate all inventoried routes within the La Posa Travel Management Area and designate them as open, closed, or limited to public use. The primary objective of the plan is to designate the La Posa Route Network in collaboration with the public and interested agencies. The Yuma Field Office has hired Advanced Resource Solutions to assist in the planning process and will be using the patented Route Evaluation Tree software to systematically evaluate all routes within the travel management area. An agency scoping meeting was held in December and three open houses were held in January to inform the public about the process. The deadline for scoping comments is March 31.

2. SUBJECT: Yuma Field Office Resource Management Plan

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Yuma Field Office Proposed Resource Management Plan (PRMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) are at the printer and the Notice of Availability is scheduled for April 11, 2008. There will be a 30-day protest period through mid May and the Record of Decision should be finalized by the end of September.

3. SUBJECT: Limitrophe Environmental Assessment

ISSUE SUMMARY: A decision regarding the Limitrophe Environmental Assessment (EA) to treat vegetation along the border is expected by the end of February or first week in March. Yuma Field Office has considered the public's comments and worked closely with the Border Patrol and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on revising the draft EA. The EA allows Border Patrol to treat 561 acres of vegetation, primarily salt cedar along the border. It also requires the Border Patrol to revegetate approximately 140 acres of cottonwood/willow and honey mesquite to offset the impacts from the treatments. Completion of this EA will allow Border Patrol to begin work this spring.

4. SUBJECT: Sears Point Rock Art Recording

ISSUE SUMMARY: The rock art recording project in the Sears Point ACEC is a Challenge Cost Share project that has been ongoing in partnership with Arizona Western College since Fiscal Year 2005. This year, the partnership has expanded to include skilled volunteers that are traveling from places in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, California, and Texas to participate in the fieldwork sessions. Professional rock art recorders from Rupestrian CyberServices and Plateau Mountain Desert Research are also contributing to this research project. This year the BLM Yuma Field Office organized a successful and productive two-week-long rock art recording session at Sears Point from January 7-18, 2008. At the end of the two-week session, the volunteers had recorded over three hundred petroglyph panels with GPS, digital photography, and scaled drawings. The information gathered during fieldwork will be compiled into a database that will be an invaluable tool for monitoring, protecting, and interpreting the petroglyphs at Sears Point. The next two-week field session is scheduled for February 25 - March 7, 2008.

5. SUBJECT: Big Marias ACEC Protection

ISSUE SUMMARY: The Big Marias ACEC, located near Blythe, CA, is a popular off-highway vehicle riding area. This year, OHV riding has been proliferating into new areas, and BLM monitoring data shows that the vehicle tracks are encroaching upon 11 of the geoglyph sites (i.e., prehistoric intaglios, cultural trails, and rock alignments) that the ACEC was designated to protect. It is imperative that these sites within the ACEC are protected quickly, before there is permanent and irreparable damage. The BLM Yuma Field Office (YFO) is currently preparing NEPA for the installation of protective fencing around each of the 11 at-risk sites. YFO holds monthly partnership meetings with the Southern Low Desert Resource Conservation and Development Council, La Cuna de Aztlan Sacred Sites Protection Circle, and Blythe Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Group to discuss plans for protection and interpretation of intaglios along the lower Colorado River. YFO will be working with these partners to find the materials and volunteers necessary to implement this protective fencing project.