

**Southwest Resource Advisory Council  
MEETING MINUTES  
Friday, July 20, 2007  
Grand Lodge Crested Butte  
6 Emmons Loop  
Mt. Crested Butte, Colorado**

**ATTENDEES**

**Resource Advisory Council Members**

Jim Cochran, Category 3	Betsy Marston, Category 2
Kenneth Emory, Category 1	Drew MacLeod, Category 1
Andrew Gulliford, Category 2	Dan Morse, Category 2
Al Heaton, Category 1	Andrea Robinsong, Category 2
Nik Kendziorski, Category 2	Kathy Welt, Category 1
Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3	Kelly Wilson, Category 3

Not present: Don Bennett, Category 1; Alan Staehle, Category 3

**BLM Staff**

Arden Anderson		Mel Lloyd
Jim Fogg		Kenny McDaniel
LouAnn Jacobson		Barb Sharrow
Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Matthew McCombs	Senator Ken Salazar	Grand Junction
John Whitney	US Congressman J. Salazar	Durango
Ann McCoy Harold	Senator Wayne Allard	Durango
Bonnie Emory	Self	Montrose
Pam Motley	Public Lands Partnership	Montrose
Bryan Miller	Crested Butte News	Crested Butte
Hap Channen	Gunnison County	Gunnison

**Opening Remarks/Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time**

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. There was a round of introductions. This morning's attendance constitutes a quorum.

Barb Sharrow, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Southwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC), covered the new Standard Operating Procedures being developed by the Washington Office. RAC members are invited to review them and provide comments back within two weeks (August 3) to Welt, Sharrow and Mel Lloyd via e-mail. The BLM has mandated that all states move to a three-tier structure. Some states are already organized that way; Colorado currently has two tiers. The State Leadership Team recently decided on their proposed structure, which places the Gunnison and Uncompahgre Field Offices in the same district as the San Juan Public Lands Center. There will also be Northwest and Front Range Districts. The field managers' authorities should not be changing, only who they report to, which will be the district manager. Sharrow invited the RAC to provide comments or concerns to either her or Kenny McDaniel. The proposal must be in Washington by August 18, 2007, and implementation is expected by fall 2009.

### **Field Managers Update**

**San Juan Public Lands Center (SJPLC):** LouAnn Jacobson reported that a meeting was held on workforce planning for the SJPLC. Budget and staffing projections remain on target with no major changes anticipated. Several of the positions identified to be abolished are currently vacant. The Deputy Regional Forester recently upheld an appeal submitted by a coalition of conservation organizations on the decision issued by the USDA Forest Service (FS) on the San Juan Northern Basin Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The BLM/FS management plan draft should be released for public comment in September.

**Gunnison Field Office (GFO):** Kenny McDaniel reported that the new bureau grazing regulations were appealed, and the 1995 regulations are being used in the interim. Fees, ownership and appeal stipulations are the main points of contention.

The Gunnison Prairie Dog is the subject of a pending decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife on whether it should be listed. The GFO will be losing a wildlife biologist and range conservationist, but they are continuing to make progress on permit renewals. A petition is being submitted to the Wildlife Commission regarding antler shed hunting activities. It is more specific than last year's submittal in order to better protect the Gunnison sage grouse.

A group of 7-8 people went on a field trip yesterday to view the Slate River valley bottom above Peanut Lake, which has been proposed by the Crested Butte Nordic Council for approximately one mile of new trail on BLM public lands. Dan Morse explained that the Lower Loop Trail is very popular. The Adaptive Sports Center and Crested Butte Land Trust are working with the Nordic Council on the proposal, which has the trail crossing the river several times. Community support is strong, and if there's an area to have higher density trails, Morse said this would be it. Funding for three bridges and avalanche danger are issues, and the groups are advised by the RAC to consult the Corp of Engineers prior to doing anything else. RAC members will be updated as the project progresses.

About 20 acres burned on Hartman Rocks, the result of an illegal camper's unattended campfire. The alleged party was cited and will appear in court in August. A Notice of Intent was submitted to explore gold mining on five acres near Lake City. A 4,600-ft. adit near the Lake Fork was part of the proposal. Based on this and other concerns, McDaniel denied the notice, which was appealed and then resubmitted to the BLM state director, who also denied the notice. That decision was appealed, and it is now with the IBLA.

**Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO):** Barb Sharrow announced that the Department of Energy released a decision on its uranium leasing environmental assessment. The decision allows for an additional 26 leases and mainly affects the Dolores, Uncompahgre and Grand Junction FOs.

More information can be found at

[http://www.lm.doe.gov/land/sites/uranium\\_leasing/uranium\\_leasing.htm](http://www.lm.doe.gov/land/sites/uranium_leasing/uranium_leasing.htm). The Blanding mill has issued a buying schedule and will open soon, but miners say the milling prices are too high. Claim activity is on the rise. Claims on private lands will be regulated by the State, but federal laws will also apply.

Western Fuels recently submitted an application to explore areas on 3<sup>rd</sup> Park, northwest of Nucla for additional coal resources.

The Travel Management Plan is progressing. A two-pronged decision is proposed — 1) areas currently open to cross-country travel would go to “limited-to-existing travel”, and 2) another 100,000 acres in the Dry Creek area would go from “cross-country travel” to “limited-to-designated travel.” A decision is anticipated by summer 2008.

The UFO is in its ninth year of land health assessments and all areas should be completed next year.

Funding is being provided in fiscal year 2008 for pre-planning activities to update the UFO Resource Management Plan.

Beth Dickerson has joined the UFO as the new wildlife biologist, and Lynda Reed, new realty specialist, has also been hired.

The fire season has been active for the past month. Some fires have been suppressed, and a 135-acre wildland fire-use fire was recently knocked down by rain. The fire situation is extremely dangerous, and the BLM must begin to implement fuels reduction projects in areas that have historically resisted yet hold heavy pockets of cheat grass and pinyon-juniper.

#### **Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM) Resource Management Plan (RMP): Potential RAC Subgroup**

Jacobson updated the RAC on the Monument’s planning process, and the Advisory Committee and its charter. The charter has been renewed but, because that was delayed, there will be a lapse in getting committee members reelected. Because the draft RMP is anticipated in September, Jacobson proposed that the SWRAC form a subgroup to assist with advising the BLM in the interim. She provided the RAC with a list of 11 recommended individuals, two of which are members of the SWRAC. Andrea Robinson made a motion that the SWRAC form the recommended subgroup and Andrew Gulliford seconded the motion. Kelly Wilson asked that Al Heaton be included as an alternate and this was added to the motion. Once a new CANM Advisory Committee is reelected, the SWRAC’s Interim CANM Subgroup will dissolve. This provision was also added to the motion. All voted in favor with none opposed to the motion that included the two friendly amendments.

#### **Dominguez-Escalante Management Area**

Sharrow briefed the RAC on recent activities involving the Dominguez Wilderness Study Area, as well as public lands in the Escalante Canyon area. The Montrose, Delta and Mesa County Commissioners worked with facilitators (Public Lands Partnership and Mesa State College Natural Resource and Land Use Policy Institute) to hold two public forums regarding the support of Wilderness and National Conservation Area designations. A series of working group meetings followed to answer two questions: 1) does the public want an NCA/Wilderness, and 2) if so, what would be the boundaries? Five geographical zones were established to facilitate this, and the jurisdiction involves both the Grand Junction and Uncompahgre Field Offices. Two meetings remain and it’s expected that the Counties’ commissioners will meet in August to make a decision that will be carried forward to Congressional representatives. The BLM does not have

the authority to pass legislation on NCA and/or Wilderness designations; only Congress can do that.

### **Uncompahgre Plateau Project Native Seed Program**

Pam Motley, executive director of the Public Lands Partnership, presented to the RAC. The UP Project encompasses collaboration, cooperation, partnerships and restoration to improve ecosystem health and natural functions of the Uncompahgre Plateau. Partners include FS, BLM, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Tri-State Generation and the DMEA. A big part of their program is noxious weed treatment. Seed for native vegetation is needed for planting after fires, fuels reduction treatments, etc., and native seed supplies are limited. Several sources and options are considered but sources from the Colorado Plateau are preferred. The goal of the native plant program is to facilitate the collection and propagation of species native to this area to restore public and private lands. Studies are being conducted on the various seed species and populations to see which is the most viable for successful cultivation. Certification and storage of the seed, as well as encouraging local growers, are also important to the program. A workshop will be held in Grand Junction in September. More information on the award-winning program can be found at [www.UPProject.org](http://www.UPProject.org).

### **Gunnison Basin Travel Management Plan**

Arden Anderson provided an update to the RAC on the Gunnison Basin Travel Management Plan being developed in cooperation with the FS. This three-season travel plan will replace the Interim Plan that was finalized in 2001. Protecting the resource, while meeting the increasing demands of the recreating public, is the main goal of the plan. The public process began last summer with pre-scoping comments from the public compiled, resource information gathered, travel system needs evaluated, and a proposed action then developed. The public scoping period on the preliminary proposed action closes August 31, 2007. Comments received will be used to develop at least three alternatives for a draft EIS, which should be released in summer 2008. As a result of this initiative, routes will be closed unless they are designated and signed as open. The two agencies are striving to merge information in order to simplify it for the public. They hope to produce one map for both FS and BLM routes, as well as educational/interpretive information for the public. Jim Cochran expressed concern with maps showing some existing routes, but not others crossing private lands to access public lands. Al Heaton said a map should exist documenting all administrative routes, which will not be shown on maps developed for public use.

### **RAC Charter**

Lloyd explained that the SWRAC Charter expires in August. Solicitors in Washington are reviewing and revising the Charters for all BLM RACs, and the new ones should be finalized in the next few weeks. The RAC expressed concerns with the national BLM's apathetic attitude toward RACs. They would like a meeting for all RAC chairs as done in past years to discuss like issues, etc.

### **Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI)**

SJPLC: For FY 2007, \$70,000 in HLI funding is being used on South Spud habitat improvement to benefit big game and the Gunnison sage grouse. This includes treating serviceberry and pinyon-juniper and is intended to also take pressure off of agricultural lands in the Dove Creek

area. The serviceberry population had grown to tree-size and was unhealthy. In this condition, it provides no benefits to wildlife and mowing should encourage new growth of a healthier serviceberry component. Funding for four projects is being sought for FY2008. Heaton expressed concern with treating Gambel oak, as its regrowth is typically even thicker.

GFO: The GFO received \$31,000, which is being used mostly in Dixie Gulch to enhance Gunnison sage grouse habitat. An aspen restoration project is underway as well. Small islands of dense aspen sprouts are dying, and mowing treatments will be used to encourage regrowth.

UFO: Two projects were funded. Tamarisk control in the San Miguel River valley received \$15,000. Another \$30,000 was awarded for river bank stabilization, but there was not time to implement the project, so funding was turned back for other FOs to use.

BLM managers from southwestern Colorado recently met regarding HLI projects. Managers decided to pool funding to allow for larger projects that will make a bigger difference. For FY2008, projects will focus on the Gunnison sage grouse, but locations have not been pinpointed. Leveraging HLI funding through partnerships will benefit not only public, but private lands as well.

### **Public Comment Period**

Matt McCombs, representing U.S. Senator Ken Salazar, updated the RAC on the initiative regarding the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) by Senators Salazar and Bingaman. Introduced in April to codify the NLCS, this legislation would establish a law that would group all of the special areas into one system, which would be intended to improve funding for and enhance management of the areas. The NLCS was formed administratively by BLM and does not have permanence through Congressional law. The bill does not create any new management authority and does not change the authorities for any of the previously designated areas within the system. It has moved through the U.S. House of Representatives (House) quickly. McCombs also noted that Senator Salazar placed a hold on the nomination of James Caswell as BLM director as a way to make a firm statement that he disagrees with BLM's decision to not allow Governor Ritter additional time to review the Roan Plateau RMP. Salazar staffers have been attending the public forums and focus meetings on the Dominguez-Escalante initiative and look forward to hearing from the Counties' commissioners.

John Whitney, representing U.S. Congressman John Salazar, reported that the appropriations bill contains funding that will benefit the Gunnison sage grouse and details will be forthcoming. It has not cleared the House yet.

Keith Bauer, executive director of the Crested Butte Nordic Council, stated that he feels the proposed new trail in the Lower Loop trail system would benefit the community, adding year-round recreational opportunities while allowing the avoidance of the Slate River road. It has wide community support. He thanked the RAC for coming out to hike the area and appreciates what they are doing.

Andrea Robinson talked about the new brochure produced by the grassroots group, Friends of Greater Dominguez. She said they are not opposed to an NCA designation; however they do

hope that the Congressional delegation includes additional lands worthy of Wilderness designation.

Kelly Wilson provided comments on the RAC's Standard Operating Procedures. He feels that if a RAC member who is appointed to the RAC as an elected official in Category 3, and must leave their elected office in late January, that RAC member should be allowed to carry out their RAC term until it expires in August. Otherwise the RAC can be left with a vacancy for several months.

**Potential Topics for September 21 meeting:**

Healthy Lands Initiative

RAC Charter and SOP

RAC appointments

Oil and gas activity updates

CANM Draft RMP

A uranium projects field trip was requested in 2008. Welt thanked Drew MacLeod for his service to the RAC. He chose not to reapply for a second term, so this will likely be his last meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.