

**BLM Las Cruces District  
Resource Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
Las Cruces, New Mexico  
Wednesday, October 26, 2016**

**Meeting Participations: RAC Members** – Jim Hyatt, Howard Bartoo, Tony Popp, John Cornell, Randy Gray, Lynn Ellins, Kim Pettit and Michael Quintana; **BLM Staff** – Bill Childress, Jennifer Montoya, Ikumi Doucette, Diane Prather and Deborah Stevens; **Public** –Susan Singley (Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument), Dara Parker (Senator Henrich’s Office), Tom Phillips (Self) and Marshal Wilson (NMSU Department of Agriculture)

**9:00 a.m. Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions**

Anthony Popp, Past RAC Chair, called the meeting to order and asked the public in attendance to introduce themselves to the RAC members. He also asked the RAC members to introduce themselves to the public and BLM staff.

Popp thanked the BLM Las Cruces District staff for the RAC field trip\* the day before the RAC meeting to visit public lands within the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (OMDP), including Picacho Peak Trailhead, Box Canyon, Corralitos, Las Uvas and Magdalena Peak.

\*The purpose of the day-long field trip was to show the RAC the resources and discuss opportunities and challenges being considered for the upcoming OMDP resource management planning.

**9:15 a.m. Election for RAC Chair and Vice Chair (RAC Members)**

The election was delayed to allow for a RAC quorum to convene for the meeting.

**9:30 a.m. Opening Remarks and Major Project Updates**

BLM Las Cruces District Manager Bill Childress welcomed the RAC, thanking them for participating in the RAC field trip and meeting, kicking off the FY 2017 RAC meeting schedule.

His updates include the following topics and discussion:

**South Road Environmental Assessment (EA)** analyzed the impacts to improve the South Road to the Spaceport. BLM has completed the EA and is consulting with the NM State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), waiting for their 30-day review and approval. BLM is ready to issue the Rights-of-Way (ROW) to Sierra

County after SHPO approves the cultural mitigation plan on the El Camino Real.

RAC Member Randy Gray, “asked if the Spaceport was still a viable enterprise, requiring the road improvement?”

RAC Member Howard Bartoo said “I heard the Spaceport is still viable and the Spaceport organization was in the process of selecting a new executive director.

LCDO District Manager Bill Childress confirmed Dan Hicks had been named as the new Spaceport Executive Director and the road improvements would serve for better public access to the BLM trails and public lands, like the El Camino Real “Point of Rocks” – not just Spaceport. He also said BLM is hoping to issue the ROW soon.

**New Mexico Copper Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** analyzes the resource impacts for the Mining Plan of Operation for a copper mine near Hillsboro, NM.

District Manager Childress said BLM is waiting for the final report on the comment analysis for the Draft EIS from the contractors, to be delivered by mid-November 2016. From the comment analysis, BLM will determine the next steps and adjustments for the Final EIS.

Childress said water, noise, traffic and dust are the prominent comments and concerns being received from the public. There is a lot of support and opposition to the copper mine.

RAC members Tony Popp and Randy Gray asked “when will the RAC be able to review the comments from the Draft EIS”. The response from Doug Haywood, BLM LCDO Lands and Minerals supervisor, is the comments/responses will be made public when the Final EIS is published in March 2017. Haywood said the March 2017 is dependent on receiving all of the information from the contractor and staying with the proposed project management schedule.

BLM LCDO is working on two EAs for **El Paso Electric ROW Amendments**. The ROW amendments are to allow El Paso Electric to replace electric poles. El Paso Electric is looking to apply for a new or revised ROW to transition from wooden to metal poles along their powerline.

District Manager Childress gave a brief update for both the **SunZia and Southline Transmission Line projects**, noting that BLM is working with the proponents to get their plans of development in order to issue the ROW grant. A comprehensive briefing will be presented to the RAC at the next meeting.

**Afton Solar Energy Zone and Solar Regional Mitigation Strategy** – Childress said BLM LCDO conducted a public meeting to discuss the mitigation strategy and the BLM staff is in the process of pulling the information together for the final report. He also said the cultural resource survey is 100% complete in the SEZ that would be offered for solar development first.

**Environmental Quality Improvement Projects (EQIP)** – Childress noted that BLM is evaluating 17 applications for producers to complete vegetation treatments, including replacing/maintaining range improvements. The projects are under the umbrella of the RESTORE NM initiative, which is a cost-sharing partnership between private land owners, Natural Resource Conservation Service and BLM.

RAC member Randy Gray asked “are the applicant/producers required to provide year-around waters under RESTORE NM, which utilizes federal funding. Childress said yes to year-around waters, but the producer can rotate the source as needed.

**10:00 a.m. Tri-County Land Use Plan Revision**

Jennifer Montoya, BLM LCDO Planning & Environmental Coordinator, provided an update on the status of the Tri-County Land Use Plan revision. A PowerPoint is attached to the RAC minutes.

**10:15 a.m. RAC BREAK**

**10:30 a.m. Proposed Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Planning Update**

Ikumi Doucette, BLM LCDO Planning & Environmental Coordinator, provided a summary of the Preparation Plan, which outlines the planning milestones for the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument from pre-scoping to the Record of Decision. Presentation notes are attached to the RAC minutes.

Diane Prather, BLM LCDO Monument Manager, provided an update on the status of the planning starting in FY 2016. Presentation notes are attached to the RAC minutes.

**10:45 a.m. Election for RAC Chair and Vice Chair (RAC Members)**

With a RAC quorum, District Manager Childress conducted the RAC Chair election. Childress called for nominations and Tony Popp was nominated by Michael Quintana and the nomination was seconded by Jim Hyatt. The RAC members approved Popp’s Chairmanship by a majority vote (7 votes).

District Manager Childress passed the election process to Popp, newly elected RAC Chair, to conduct the RAC Vice Chair election. Popp called for nominations and Howard Bartoo nominated Randy Gray and the nomination was seconded by John Cornell. The RAC members approved Randy's Vice Chairmanship by a majority vote (7 votes).

**11:00 a.m. Future meeting topics and dates**

RAC members discussed potential dates for next RAC meeting, asking for the RAC secretary to issue a Doodle Calendar survey for the second (Jan. 9) or fourth week (Jan. 23) of 2017. Deborah Stevens will conduct the survey via email.

**Potential meeting topics and field trips:**

SunZia Transmission Line

Southline Transmission Line

RESTORE NM

Planning Updates for Tri-County and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

New Mexico Copper FEIS Update with potential field trip to the mine site.

Assessment, Inventory and Monitoring Protocol

Planning 2.0

New Guidance for Travel Management Planning

RAC member Kim Pettit asked BLM to share the November 2016 Focus Group lists be shared with the RAC members. The Focus Groups will be discussing OMDP NM recreation management, and the RAC can help identify any stakeholders missing from the list.

**11:30 a.m. Public Comment Period**

The RAC Chair opened the public comment period. There were four members of the public and only two spoke.

**Susan Singley**, representing the Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, said she would be happy to provide additional outreach for BLM on the upcoming Focus Group meetings.

**Tom Phillips**, representing himself, said he was happy to participate in the RAC field trip and to visit some public lands very important to him, including Picacho Peak and Box Canyon. He asked the RAC to pursue and encourage the BLM to

acquire access to these two sites, and to look at the opportunities to reconfigure the access potential for Magdalena Peak.

**12:00 p.m. Adjourn Meeting**

The RAC Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. John Cornell made the motion and Howard Bartoo seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.