

SUMMARY MINUTES
PECOS DISTRICT RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN HABITAT PRESERVATION AREA OF CRITICAL
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (LPC ACEC) – LIVESTOCK GRAZING
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
December 01, 2015

Chuck opened the meeting and welcomed all. Tish McDaniel, Co-Committee Chair explained that most in attendance were familiar with the charge and goals of the Committee and explained that they would be hearing about the meeting and conversations BLM had with managers of the Carrizo Plain National Monument in California on how they work with grazing, etc. on the Monument and to discuss mesquite on the Sand Ranch.

Adam Ortega, Roswell BLM explained that their discussions included the RMP, their grazing, starting and stopping, etc.. They explained that they use a 10-year cooperative agreement with the grazer. They do not graze every year, most recently due to drought. Annual free use grazing permits are issued and their biologists decide whether to allow grazing or not.

Kyle Arnold, BLM Ass't. Field Manager for Resources explained that with the 10 year agreement a "bill" is issued which is a voluntary use fee if grazed that year.

Recommendations from this Committee were group shown to them and they expressed agreement that it was important that we have involved public notice. They also liked the ranking sheet that had been developed. A tour of the area was taken and they were very impressed with the amount of grass seen.

They explained that they use fire project work, similar to what Roswell would like to look at long-term. Field Manager Schmidt stated that they are used to non-native grasses in their area.

Adam relayed that they use Section 15 permits there, that they don't control numbers and opened up permits when grass is available. The rancher would be responsible for monitoring numbers of stock grazing. This area could potentially graze more with regular rains. Other wildlife being dealt with include a large lizard and a kangaroo rat.

Ms. McDaniel asked where the Committee should go from this point. The Committee has recommended fire, grazing and how to find a grazer, and would like to know the direction from this point on.

Adam explained that BLM must do more transportation evaluation to complete the Plan, as well as recreation use. The public scoping is planned to be done in January/February of 2016 and it is hoped to have applications and cooperative agreements to be signed by mid-summer.

It was asked how grazers were selected on the Monument and it was explained that the land was acquired through TNC and many have been grandfathered in.

It was asked if the Committee could view the Plan before release to the public. This will be looked into and if not possible the Committee will have ample time to comment at the same time.

Randy Howard, BLM Wildlife Biologist discussed a research proposal which has been developed to study the effects of fire, fire & grazing, and grazing on the Lesser prairie chicken in the area. This proposal involves several collaborators and funding sources. This would be a 3-year study, looking at recommendations given by the sub-committee and backing with science. Areas were delineated on a map and different aspects of the proposal were discussed.

It was asked how moisture would be factored in. Chuck Schmidt relayed that good research will account for variability of moisture. The ACEC was created for the betterment of the chicken and the lizard. The research will mirror natural occurrence to create variability to the area and determine what the chickens do.

Randy explained that different aspects will be worked on at the same time so that when all is complete grazing can begin. He stated that if the Committee has any other recommendations to be gained by this scientific study, to let him know. The budget for this project was also reviewed.

A comment was made about grazing in an area close to a burn and chickens appearing, the reason for the influx would not be known; that doing in stages is a good idea.

Chuck Schmidt stated that a task for the Committee would be to ask what kind of questions should be brought to management of this proposal.

A comment was made that it would be a lost opportunity if grazing is not included with fire. Data gathering is important to be able to make correct determinations of each treatment.

Chuck stated that it should be determined whether there is enough statistical area available to obtain the desired information.

It was stated that GPS technology can be used to great advantage.

Glen Garnand briefly discussed the Activity Plan goals and objectives. It is planned to publicly scope this in January or February of 2016, with the transportation and recreation being completed. Comments to the written document from the public will be reviewed and when completed a final document done by April.

It was stated that the “who, when and how” of grazing should be worked on and accomplished so that when grazing can begin will have individual/s/on board.

Chuck asked that any **questions/comments be submitted through Ms. McDaniel, by January 15**, to be brought to BLM. All have access to the RMPA on line and it was suggested that pages 30-31 be reviewed.

It was stated that the dynamics have changed using fire and grazing and will complicate the monitoring and managing but it doesn't mean it can't be done.

It was suggested adding to the ranking criteria a question as to whether a grazer would allow working with a researcher relative to his cows.

It was asked if there might be any benefit to utilizing data from the Weaver Ranch and it was stated that researchers are working with institutions housing this data.