

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Idaho Resource Advisory Council Meeting
May 15, 2024, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time
In-person and virtual via Zoom
Meeting Notes

Resource Advisory Council (RAC)

Members

Name	Interest Represented/Affiliation
Present (in-person)	
Scott Nichols, RAC Chair	Dispersed Recreation
Zachary Funkhouser	Energy and Minerals Development
Kristy Tucker	Commercial Timber Industry
Terrell Huddleston	Dispersed Recreation
Brenda Pace	Archaeological & Historic Interests
Chad Colter	Tribal Representative
Tyrone Daniels	Tribal Representative
Brenda Pace	Archaeological and Historic Interests
Jennifer Pierce	Academia
Present (virtual via zoom)	
Steven Lentz	Commercial Recreation
Leon Smith	Federal Grazing/Permits
Kathy Rinaldi	Environmental Organizations
John Robison	Environmental Organizations
Absent:	
McKinsey Lyon	Energy and Mineral Development

BLM Leadership and Staff

Name	Title	Office
Peter Ditton	State Director (Acting)	Idaho State Office
June Shoemaker	Associate State Director	Idaho State Office
MJ Byrne	Idaho RAC Coordinator	Idaho State Office
Caleb Ashby	Public Affairs Officer	Idaho State Office
Dennis Strange	Deputy State Director, Resources, Land Tenure and Planning (Acting)	Idaho State Office
Martin Adell	State Fire Management Officer (Acting)	Idaho State Office
Kurt Pindel	District Manager	Coeur d'Alene District Office (CDA)
Suzanne Endsley	Assistant District Manager	Coeur d'Alene District Office
Ray Peace	Field Manager	Coeur d'Alene Field Office
Dan Patten	Assistant Field Manager	Cottonwood Field Office
Rebecca Urbanczyk	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Cottonwood Field Office
Ryan Turner	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Cottonwood Field Office
Morgan O'Brien	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Coeur d'Alene Field Office
Jonathan Stein	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Coeur d'Alene Field Office
Jake Bachtel	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Coeur d'Alene Field Office
Trent Brown	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Coeur d'Alene Field Office
Mike Courtney	District Manager	Twin Falls District Office
Mary D'Aversa	District Manager	Idaho Falls District Office
Tanya Thrift	District Manager	Boise District Office

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Agenda Item: Welcome and Introductions

Presenters: Peter Ditton, BLM Idaho State Director (Acting) Designated Federal Official for the RAC, June Shoemaker Idaho Associate State Director and Scott Nichols, RAC Chair.

The RAC meeting was held at the BLM Interagency Natural Resources Center, 3232 W. Nursery Road, CDA, ID and virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.

RAC Chair Scott Nichols welcomed everyone present and online and requested they introduce themselves - BLM managers, staff and RAC members also identify interest represented/affiliation. He welcomed Marc Kilmer, State Policy Director / Regional Director for U.S. Senator Jim Risch and Caleb Davis, District Director for U.S. Representative Russ Fulcher. Nichols welcomed members of the public and informed them of how to sign up to make comments in person or virtually via zoom during the public comment period at 3:00 p.m.

Byrne confirmed a quorum was present including those RAC members participating virtually. This will enable the RAC to vote on the Salmon Field Office Proposed Recreation Fee Change in the agenda.

Agenda Item: State Director Updates

Presenters: Peter Ditton, BLM Idaho State Director (Acting) Designated Federal Official for the RAC, and June Shoemaker Idaho Associate State Director

Ditton thanked all the RAC members who attended both in-person and virtually. He noted the need for their vote on the Salmon Field Office Proposed Recreation fee changes at several sites in eastern Idaho. A presentation was emailed to the RAC members prior to the meeting. The BLM-Idaho Falls District Manager Mary D'Aversa will be reviewing the proposed fee changes with this presentation later in the agenda. Ditton encouraged the RAC to continue their active involvement in various Public Land Use and planning efforts.

Shoemaker spoke with the RAC about the transition of Karen Kelleher from BLM-ID State Director to Deputy Director for State Operations. In her new role, Kelleher will lead 12 State Directors and be responsible for managing and directing state operations, encompassing conservation, recreation and commercial uses on both the surface and subsurface estate. Her role will be integral to formulating and implementing Bureau objectives, policies and programs at the state and regional levels. Peter Ditton, former Assistant State Director who retired at the end of 2023, agreed to come back and serve as Acting State Director for next six months. The BLM will be announcing a new Public Lands Rule the last week of May. Emphasis will be on mitigation, conservation and restoration of BLM managed public lands nationwide. Additional information about it will be released that week. Shoemaker reviewed status of BLM planning actions across the state. RAC members expressed interest in being included in public meeting notifications for draft plans. BLM is taking a national approach to its recreation strategy. Public meetings for the rollout of this strategy are planned for the spring of 2025.

Agendas Item: CDA District Proposed Recreation Fee Proposal

Presenter: Kurt Pindel, BLM CDA District Manager

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Pindel noted the presentation was their preliminary fair-market analysis. A final analysis will be presented to the RAC at their July meeting for consideration. During the field tour on May 14, RAC members toured Mica Bay Boater Park, Blackwell Island Recreation Site, the City of CDA's Third Street Marina, a city-managed site, Wallace Forest Conservation Area/Blue Creek Bay Day Use Area, managed by Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation. Recreation fees in the CDA Field Office were last updated in 2012. Visitation, as well as maintenance costs for BLM recreation sites in north Idaho areas have significantly increased. Six non-fee sites were shown to the RAC – Mineral Ridge, Beauty Bay, Blue Creek Bay, Gamlin Lake, Ross Point and Cougar Bay. Recreation sites that charge a fee help cover the costs of support and maintenance of that site, but also help cover the costs to maintain non-fee sites. An annual pass of \$10 for day-use sites will be proposed to help any other sources of funds received (e.g. grants). The following fee sites were discussed including amenities and fees with comparisons to nearby city and state-managed recreation sites: Blackwell Island, Mineral Ridge Boat Launch, Mica Bay Boater Park, Windy Bay Boater Park, Killarney Boar Launch and Campground, and Huckleberry Campground. RAC Member Chad Colter asked how BLM plans to address inconsistent application of fees/waivers of fees for Tribal members. He suggested the online reservation form should include a place where Tribal Members could check a box to create more uniformity for reservations across the nation. RAC members urged BLM to increase education and awareness of the fee waiver for Tribal members.

Agenda Item: Salmon Field Office Proposed Recreation Fee Proposal
Presenter: Mary D'Aversa, BLM Idaho Falls District Manager

The Salmon Field Office (SFO) has approximately 24 recreation sites, several are free. The fees were last updated in early 1980s and 1990s. D'Aversa presented the SFO Recreation Fee Sites Business Plan prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), BLM recreation fee program policy manual and handbook (H-2930-1 Recreation Permit and Fee Administration Handbook). The Business Plan covered the description of eight fee sites, fees collected, proposed fee changes, associated operating costs, financial analysis, impacts of charging fees and planned expenditures of fees in greater detail. Fee proposals, fair market analysis of proposed fees, current and proposed fee structure, current and proposed fee revenue and expenditures, proposed use of fee revenue, positive impacts of proposed fees, and impacts if fees are not implemented. The Communications and Marketing Plan has given the public opportunities to learn about the proposals and submit comments for consideration. Eight fee sites were addressed, including Geertson Shelter, McFarland Campground, Shoup Bridge Campground, Tower Rock Campground, Williams Lake Campground and Sharkey Hot Springs. A new recreation fee site is under construction, Tarpons Roost Cabin. The year-round cabin will open for rental in fall 2024.

After discussion, RAC member Dr. Jennifer Pierce moved to approve the annual fee proposal for SFO with an escalator clause to be included for the entire plan. The cost of Sharkey Hot Springs will have a \$2 escalator fee increase. RAC member Kathy Rinaldi seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

Contact Linda R. Price, Salmon Field Manager, lrprice@blm.gov, 208-745-5410 or Travis Seaberg, Outdoor Recreation Planner, gseaberg@blm.gov, 208-756-5412 for additional information.

Agenda Item: Idaho State Office Resources Updates to Policy; Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA); Renewable Energy; Recreation; and Realty Actions
Presenter: Dennis Strange, BLM-ID SO Acting Deputy State Director, Resources, Land Tenure and Planning.

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Policy updates included the Public Lands Rule that will become effective June 10, 2024. The purpose is to protect the most intact, healthiest landscapes; restore landscapes back to health and ensure decision-making is based on science and data. Additional information about this rule can be found at <https://www.blm.gov/public-lands-rule>. The Renewable Energy Rule will reduce annual acreage rents and capacity fees for solar and wind energy developments; improve and clarify the application process; update criteria to prioritize applications and sets diligent operation requirements. Additional information about this rule can be found at <https://www/blm.gov/renewable-energy-rule>. A new Broadband Rule will provide consistency in application review for communication facilities on public lands; addresses risks of wildfire to and from powerlines on BLM-managed land and updates BLM cost recovery fee schedule. Additional information about this rule can be found at <https://www.blm.gov/broadband-rule>. The Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Rule – Waste Prevention Rule increases royalty rates for new oil and gas leases; increases minimum lease bond amount; directs development towards areas with higher potential and requires steps to reduce natural gas waste from oil and gas operations. Additional information about this rule can be found at <https://www.blm.gov/onshore-oil-and-gas-leasing-rule>, <https://www.blm.gov/2024-waste-prevention-rule>.

BLM Idaho received \$2.9 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to fund Ecosystem Restoration projects including preventing spread of invasive species, promote resilient recreation, revegetation of disturbed public lands through contracts and agreements including Good Neighbor Agreements and National Revegetation Strategy. BIL Fuels restoration projects in BLM Idaho received \$ 25 million. Funded activities include fuel break maintenance, hazard fuel reduction and habitat enhancement. Idaho BIL funding for Burned Area Response and Restoration was \$1.9 million. Funding is focused on post wildfire actions. 1-5 years, 5-10 years and improve availability for seed used in post fire restoration. A map of Idaho showing location of projects was included in the presentation. Additional information about the BIL Program can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build/>

Three Restoration Landscapes and Project areas were identified on a map of Idaho for Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding. Snake River Plain located in the Upper Salmon region of southwestern Idaho received \$10 million focusing on sage brush/sage grouse habitat restoration. East Idaho River and Plains received \$7.8 million focusing on sage brush/sage grouse habitat restoration and aquatic/mesic restoration. Upper Salmon River Landscapes received \$9.1 million focusing on sage brush/sage grouse habitat restoration and aquatic/mesic restoration. Youth engagement in restoration activities is mandated to comprise 15 percent of total funding each state receives. A map of Idaho showing location of projects was included in the presentation. Additional information about the IRA Program can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/inflation-reduction-act-guidebook/>

Several renewable energy projects are in initial screening process in BLM Idaho; 2 wind applications, 11 solar applications and 28 geothermal nominations. One wind energy project is undergoing analysis through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For reference, projects on non-BLM lands in Idaho are producing 970 megawatts (MW) from wind installations and 830 MW from solar installations. Renewable Energy projects in other western states are much larger than in Idaho. A utility-scale solar energy final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) is anticipated for release in August 2024. The document proposes criteria for exclusion from solar energy development and design features to be applied to proposed projects.

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The BLM's Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation has four strategic pillars: grow and diversify resources for BLM recreation; prioritize and embrace partnerships; expand outreach and establish a culture of inclusion and meet the demand and while protecting resources and improving access. All BLM states will host a Recreation Blueprint Summit. BLM Idaho's summit is tentatively planned for fall 2025, likely in Boise. Mini summits or meetings across Idaho are being planned for fall/winter 2024/2025. The purpose of these summits is to determine challenges and opportunities; engage a wide variety of recreation stakeholders, partners and publics; provide an opportunity for those who cannot travel to Boise and develop an outline for the statewide summit in Boise. [https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2023-08/Blueprint for 21st Century Outdoor Recreation508.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2023-08/Blueprint%20for%2021st%20Century%20Outdoor%20Recreation508.pdf)

Four major realty actions through Lands and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) acquisitions were discussed with the RAC. In November 2023, 3,489 -acre fee acquisition was completed in Bonneville County, and a 2,356-acre conservation easement was completed in January 2024 in Fremont County, both located in southeastern Idaho. In March 2024, a LWCF acquisition of 80 acres was completed in Lemhi County in central Idaho and another in March 2024, of 320-acres in Boise County within the Ridge-to-Rivers Trail system near Boise in southwestern Idaho.

Agenda Item: 2024 Pre-season Fire Outlook

Presenter: Martin Adell, BLM Idaho Acting State Fire Management Officer

Adell said the mix of partnerships and collaboration with Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Idaho Department of Lands and local entities is critical to BLM-Idaho's 12 million acre of public lands fire protection mission. He showed the RAC several maps including above normal snowpack for 2023-24; soil moisture as of May 2024; temperature and precipitation over last 30 days and; fuel loading-carryover from 2023. Increased precipitation this spring indicates a traditional start to fire season. The drought is diminishing, but still present in parts of Idaho. Fuel moisture is above normal across the Great Basin due to consistent storms and heavy precipitation this spring. The Great Basin July/August outlook shows areas of southern Idaho, northern Nevada and northern Utah with more significant grass growth in the lower elevations that have seen higher precipitation and that will continue to be monitored. Areas further north will continue with normal fire potential into early summer. With very little fire activity in 2023, carryover will still be present in many of the areas as well adding to fine fuel loading. Volunteers from Rural Fire Protection Association (RFPA) Districts continue to play a major role in successful, early fire containment and suppression efforts across Idaho and the Great Basin.

Agenda Item: Public comment period

Presenter: Scott Nichols, RAC Chair.

Two members of the public provided comments to the RAC via Zoom. Diana Nielson reiterated her opposition the Lava Ridge Wind Energy Proposal and the BLM's new landscape scale recreation initiative. Chase Kelly asked BLM to show in their Lava Ridge proposed Wind Energy project how they have incorporated economic studies and impacts into the EIS.

Agenda Item: BLM Idaho District Updates: Idaho Falls District; Twin Falls District; Boise District; Coeur d'Alene District.

Presenters: Mary D'Aversa, BLM Idaho Falls District (IFD) Manager, Mike Courtney, BLM Twin Falls

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District (TFD) Manager, Tanya Thrift, BLM Boise District (BDO) Manager and Kurt Pindel, BLM Coeur D'Alene (CDA) District Manager

IFD manager Mary D'Aversa reviewed projects being funded by \$7.8 million from IRA in East Idaho Rivers and Plains and \$9.1 million in Upper Salmon Restoration Landscapes. IFD received \$300K for projects from Great American Outdoors Act.

The Shoshone Bannock Tribes have contributed significantly to the development of interpretive signs at several sites throughout the IFD. High school field trips have also been conducted to increase knowledge about cultural resources among Tribal youth.

The Upper Snake East Travel plan will be published in the next two weeks, working collaboratively with partners for a connected transportation system.

An update on the status of several phosphate production initiatives was reviewed. IFD manages 83 Federal phosphate leases that produce 22 percent of this strategic mineral for the nation.

Lands and realty update included Intermountain Gas company proposed gas pipeline replacement that will involve multiple Federal and state agencies, BLM district and field offices.

Bear River Basin water rights adjudication is continuing. All four basins are located within the Pocatello Field Office (FO). Fuels reduction forestry sales are continuing in the Upper Snake and Pocatello FO's. Prescribed burns and fuel breaks continue in the Pocatello FO.

Plans are moving forward in the Challis FO for construction of the Sheep Creek Bridge project planned for implementation in 2025/2026. Located in the Jim McClure-Jerry Peak Wilderness area, the bridge will improve public safety and reduce damage to fish habitat by preventing human and livestock trampling of Chinook Salmon and Steelhead trout redds (spawning beds).

During Fiscal Year 2024, the Salmon FO plans to continue aggressively managing invasive plant species in a multi-partnership effort to aeriaily treat over 2100 acres for cheatgrass, spotted knapweed and rush skeletonweed.

TFD manager Mike Courtney told the RAC the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Energy Project Final EIS is scheduled to be issued in early June. BLM received over 11,000 comments on the Draft EIS resulting in a further refined BLM Preferred Alternative. Changes include lowering height (740' to 660') and number of wind turbines (400 to 241).

Gateway West (GWW) is a 500-kilovolt transmission line originating in eastern Wyoming and terminating in western Idaho. PacifiCorp and Idaho power were permitted to construct GWW on public lands in 2014.

Twin Falls District has identified three shooting range areas that we will focus on developing in the near term – two in Shoshone and one in Burley. Working on clearances and developing conceptual designs. A phased approach is planned. These areas were selected because they are well suited for shooting – remote, direction of

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fire, availability of dirt; and can be expanded into more complex ranges in the future – looking to partners to help in this area.

Archeological inventory surveys will be conducted on an additional 5,000 acres in the Jarbidge FO where renewable energy development is anticipated from BIL/IRA funds received in 2024; 7470 acres have already been surveyed for known and unknown cultural sites.

With the Endangered Species Act listing of Slickspot Peppergrass, Jarbidge FO will survey over 30,000 acres for potential habitat inventory, culminating over a decade of survey and data collection. Jarbidge FO is also working on renewal of 93 grazing permits.

TFD has the largest fuels program in the Bureau. During FY 2024, with \$3.8 million in funding received through BIL and other funds; 93,476 acres have been treated to date. There are 39 RFPAs in TFD.

The district's current dispatch center located in Shoshone FO is outdated. In FY25 a new dispatch center will be constructed on BLM lands at Interstate 84 and Highway 93 Interchange in Shoshone FO. A new fire center, staging area and crew quarters will follow.

The Environmental Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R) crew from TFD received the 2023 BLM Conservation Project of the Year award.

BDO - Travel Management Planning across the BLM began shortly after passage of the Omnibus Public Management Act of 2009. Four of five huge travel management plans (TMP's) have been completed with decisions issued by spring 2024. All four decisions were challenged. The Grandview TMP decision was cancelled to develop an updated EA. Scoping is beginning in the fall of 2024.

Funding for BDO received from BIL is enabling several ES&R treatments throughout the district; trails, enclosures and other restoration efforts and; Juniper removal treatments. GAOA funding is enabling the maintenance and improved accessibility on Payette River's Beehive Bend boat ramp located in Payette County. Road and parking repairs, ramp and dock replacement and improved accessibility are also being funded by GAOA at the Cove Recreation Site in Elmore County.

The Four Rivers and Owyhee FO's have 14 renewable energy applications near completion. Review of completed applications is scheduled to begin in early 2025.

The district's Wild Horse and Burro Program has a public walk-in adoption on June 7-8, with online adoptions ongoing at the Boise District Corrals. On June 15, 4-H youth will pick-up mustang foals for gentling, training and showing at the Western Idaho Fair in August. The Nampa Horse Park will host a Branded Bonanza Event from June 28-30.

Restart of the Delamar Mine Project is under review with Federal and State agencies working on baseline data and developing a path forward. The Owyhee and Bruneau FOs are working on mineral withdrawals for Silver City National Historic Site and the Oolite proposed Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Work is continuing on fuel breaks for Tri-State, Paradigm and Soda Fire as well as Bruneau Owyhee Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration. The Spring Creek Prescribed Burn, located in Owyhee FO is projected to be completed in fall 2024.

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LWCF funds are being sought for the South Fork Willow Creek acquisition in the Four Rivers FO will result in 320 acres of additional big game winter range and recreation access. LWCF funds are also being sought for the acquisition of 104 acres in the Halverson Bar Trails area in the Snake River Canyon. Partners in this project include Canyon County and Celebration Park Partners.

Coeur d’Alene District (CDA) manages approximately 230,000 acres of public land encompassing 11 northern counties in Idaho with two field offices (FO), Cottonwood in the south and Coeur d’Alene in the north.

Two primary focus areas of the district are water-based recreation activities and forestry program. Population growth and public interest in recreation continues to grow at a rapid pace. The Cottonwood FO has seen a 20 percent increase in visitors in recent years, with Coeur d’Alene FO reporting a 35 percent increase.

Cottonwood FO has 61 river outfitter Special Recreation Permits (SRP), 1 event SRP and 3 hunting outfitter SRP’s. Cottonwood maintains 13 recreation sites, of which 5 are fee sites (campgrounds). Coeur d’Alene FO manages 25 sites, including 6 fee sites (boat launches/campgrounds). Coeur d’Alene Lake, a 112 mile stretch of the Lower Salmon River and the Clearwater River are highlights for recreation, camping, fishing, hiking, biking Off-Highway Vehicles and wildlife viewing.

CDA accounts for 68 percent of BLM forestry on public lands. Major timber harvests listed for the Coeur d’Alene FO and Cottonwood FO going into FY25 totaled approximately 23 million board feet (MMBF).

Staffing has been an issue with high housing and living costs and low housing availability. The district is planning to utilize the Experienced Services Program, which allows for temporary employment opportunities of individuals 55 years or older to work on specific project assignments.

Over the past two years, the CDA District has completed or will complete 10 projects using BIL/IRA funding for hazardous fuels reduction, prescribed burning and other landscape restoration projects. Treatment of 2,122 acres will be completed when all projects are completed.

The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) is a tool used by CDA to fund cooperative forest health projects with other agencies and share resources to accomplish goals. Multiple GNA projects were listed. With patchwork land management areas in CDA it is imperative that specialists in many fields remain up to date on a multitude of land management issues and the activities of all agencies within the district.

Two detailed charts were shown to the RAC of upcoming projects in both Cottonwood and Coeur d’Alene FO’s Pindel said projects can take multiple years to complete and monitoring is an ongoing process. Public engagement activities for all ages and several volunteer efforts were highlighted including the annual Clearwater Cleanup during National Public Land’s Day and the annual, fall Veteran’s Cruises to spot eagles.

Agenda Item: Nominations Update

Presenter: MJ Byrne, BLM Idaho RAC Coordinator

Byrne reported that in May, Twin Falls County Commissioner Don Hall was appointed to the BLM Idaho RAC to fill the position of a local elected official. Seventeen applications were received for RAC positions

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expiring during fall of 2024. The nominations are forwarded to BLM Headquarters for review and vetting and to DOI for further review. This process can often take up to several months prior to appointment of RAC members by the Secretary of Interior.

Agenda Item: Action Items reviewed.

Presenter: MJ Byrne, RAC Coordinator

1. Add Public Lands Rule Integration to RAC agenda for July 11th meeting;
2. RAC asked for a more detailed budget discussion, especially impacts due to budget reductions;
3. BLM agreed to involve the RAC in travel management planning especially in Boise District;
4. Add to the RAC meeting agenda for July 11th meeting - the CDA District Office presentation of final funding request figures and information for changes in Recreation Fee Proposal for RAC review and approval.
5. RAC members interested in serving as the Chair. or Vice-Chair. of the RAC will send Byrne an email stating their interest in qualifications before June 26, 2024, so she can send expressions of interest to all RAC members for their consideration by July 3, 2024. A vote will be held during the July RAC meeting to elect a new Chair. and Vice-Chair.

Agenda Item: Wrap-up and closing remarks.

Presenters: Peter Ditton, BLM Idaho State Director (Acting)

Peter thanked RAC members for their participation, engagement, and feedback and members of the public for their participation and comments. He encouraged RAC members to attend the next meeting, July 11, in person, in Boise, with a virtual participation option for the meeting.

Agenda Item: Adjourn

Presenter: Scott Nichols, RAC Chair

Scott Nichols moved unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting at 4:45 p.m. The motion passed without objection.