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Missouri Basin Resource Advisory Committee (MBRAC) Business Meeting Minutes September 11, 2024 Glasgow City-County Library Glasgow, MT

Individuals Present:

MBRAC Members: *(a quorum was present)*

In Person:

(Category 1) Kevin Wagner, Jeff Schafer, Perri Jacobs, Miles Hutton, Trisha Tonn

(Category 2) Greg Jergeson, Mark Good, Scott Heidebrink

(Category 3) Jody Mason, James Moore

Online via Teams: Doug Krings (Category 2), William (Bill) Jensen (Category 2), Stacey Barta (Category 3).

Public:

In Person: Wesly DeGuilo (Congressman Matthew Rosendale field rep), John Fahlgren (Valley County Commissioner)

Online via Teams: Charlene Redding (Senator Steve Daines field rep), Garrett Titus, (Montana Wildlife Federation, conservation policy specialist)

BLM Staff:

In Person: Wendy Warren (MBRAC Designated Federal Official and District Manager, Eastern Montana Dakotas District (EMDD)), Ben Hileman (Acting District Manager North Central Montana District (NCMD)), Kathleen Tribby (Field Manager Malta FO), Michael Borgreen (Field Manager Glasgow FO), Mark Jacobsen (EMDD Public Affairs), Gina Baltrusch (NCMD Public Affairs), Leah Dailey (Deputy State Director for Support Services, Eastern States), Jennifer Mannie (Administrative Assistant EMDD), Donna Bradley (Resource Assistant, Miles City FO)

Online via Teams:

Eric Lepisto (Field Manager Miles City FO)

Jason Snellman (Outdoor Recreation Planner, Malta FO)

Thomas Valencia (Park Manager, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument)

Zane Fulbright (District Manager, North Central Montana District)

Nate Arave (Field Manager, Billings FO)

Edward Kraft (Field Manager North Dakota FO)

Adam Carr (Supervisory Land Use Specialist Realty, Land & Renewable Energy Branch Montana State Office)

Scott Haight (Associate State Director Montana State Office)

Matthew Comer (Project Manager Glasgow FO)

Meeting began at Noon

Mark Jacobsen welcomed members and the meeting was brought to order; site orientation, safety and housekeeping items were reviewed. Leah Dailey and Jennifer Mannie assisted members in completing travel reimbursement vouchers. The meeting was turned over to the MBRAC Chairperson Perri Jacobs. All members and BLM staff introduced themselves, as it was the first meeting for newly appointed members.

BLM Manager Briefings

Ben Hileman - Acting District Manager, North Central Montana District

Zane Fulbright was recently selected as District Manager NCMD. Start date is Sept. 22, 2024.

The American Prairie decision was issued July 2022. The petition for stay was denied in May 2024 allowing the decision to be implemented. The appeal remains with the Department of Hearing and Appeals.

Funding from the bi-partisan infrastructure bill has been applied to Recreation improvements at Sullivan Bridge and East Butte at Sweet Grass Hills; vault toilets at both sites and a small campground at East Butte.

The boat ramp construction at Full Banks Landing will begin the week of September 9, 2024. The current ramp is limited to use during high water. The new ramp will provide improved recreation use and will benefit Search and Rescue teams and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks projects. The office has donated a fire engine to both Blaine and Petroleum County. Both have been well used this season.

Wendy Warren-District Manager, Eastern Montana Dakotas District

South Dakota Field Office Update:

The new South Dakota Field Manager has been selected; Jake Williams, and he will report October, 2024.

The Fort Meade Recreation Area contracted project for potable water (near Sturgis) has been awarded and will begin work soon. The pipeline will provide water to various locations

throughout the recreation area and is a considerable undertaking.

The Yellow Creek Shooting Area (Recreation and Public Purposes Act Project) is being completed to allow the county to take over management of that site. This project has been years in the making.

Powder House Pass Subdivision has isolated slivers of public lands as small as .01 acres throughout the area. The cumulative total acreage is less than two acres; and the intention is to sell and transfer the acreage into private ownership. The SDFO has also been working on a bentonite mining reclamation project, which has been ongoing for a couple of years.

Billings Field Office Update:

A mineral withdrawal --for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range will be completed within the coming months. A beaver dam-analog project (designed to replicate the actions on watercourses by beaver) is being completed at the Milton Ranch and new shade structure has been built at Sundance Recreation area.

North Dakota Field Office Update:

Quarterly meetings are scheduled with the Three Affiliated Tribes. The Tribes are very active in developing oil and gas on their area of jurisdiction/reservation. The Public Lands Rule has been released and public meetings have been held to share the information. Waste Management Rule and Sage grouse amendment are coming out in the near future.

Miles City Field Office Update:

The Snowy River CO2 Sequestration Project in Carter County has received comments which will be considered and addressed in the environmental assessment; no decision has been made at this time. A woven wire fence removal project has been ongoing for several years in coordination with individual permittees in multiple counties.

Solar PEIS & Updated Western Solar Plan

Adam Carr- Branch Chief Realty, Land & Renewable Energy Montana State Office

Presentation slides were provided to members. The proposed plan was released last month and is currently in a protest period and the Governor's Consistency Review. The Governor's review ends October 25, 2024. This plan does not include any land in North Dakota. Montana does not have any pending solar energy applications.

It is hoped to have a signed record of decision by the end of the calendar year.

Public scoping comments were considered and resulted in changes in the final document.

Design features and mitigation will be site specific when applications are received. Questions and discussion followed the presentation.

Malta FO Recreation Business Plan & Recreation Fees Update

Kathy Tribby-Field Manager Malta FO & Jason Snellman- Outdoor Recreation Planner, Malta FO

Presented a proposal for fee changes for recreation sites in the Malta FO area. Justification for the change is due to the lack of funding for additional recreation staff and increased contract costs for maintenance and management at the sites. Current fee schedule was established in 2014. Request members to consider the plan handout, make suggestions for the final plan and be ready to vote at the next MBRAC meeting. Sites included in the plan are Camp Creek and Montana Gulch Campgrounds, Buffington Day Use Area, and Zortman Ranger Station. Questions and discussion followed the presentation. Other field offices with recreation sites under MBRAC responsibility may bring fee proposal changes to be voted on at the next MBRAC meeting. Jeff Schaffer would like to see parity of campgrounds that are located close together; specifically, James Kip Recreation Area, which is managed under the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument. Members asked to make comments through e-planning to be considered in the final plan.

Hi-Line Sagebrush Anchor Restoration Landscape Overview

Matt Comer-Project Manager, Glasgow FO

Provided a status update of restoration landscapes across Montana and locally showing a slideshow presentation of Sagebrush Restoration Landscape; handouts provided to members. Thirty organizations are partners working together to improve the landscape. The Inflation Reduction Act provided \$7mil and \$2mil received from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The restoration landscape covers three million acres in south Phillips County and Valley County, about half is BLM land. A study north of Glasgow is using herbicides, soil amendments and a combination of the treatments to measure the effects on Crested Wheatgrass and other non-native species. BLM, Ft Belknap College, and operators are working together to implement projects and improve sites. Habitat improvements benefit Sage Grouse and Pronghorn populations and increase recreation opportunities. Conifer removal, prescribed burns and mechanical treatments are being considered for grass and forb growth. Questions and discussion followed the presentation.

Meeting Close-out, Requests and Future Meeting Topics

Map of solar project areas that are available for Western Solar Plan development. Malta Field Office requested to be on the agenda for action on the Recreation Business plan. Miles City Field Office requested to be on the agenda to consider recreation fees. RAC members requested updates be sent two weeks prior to meetings. RAC members should forward any requests for the next meeting's agenda topics to Perri Jacobs or Trisha Tonn.

Next meeting, January 16, 2025-- a virtual TEAMs meeting; 8:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Agenda to follow once topics have been decided upon.

Public Comment Period

John Fahlgren, Valley County Commissioner, talked about commission work with state agencies and the BLM for Sage Grouse management. He expressed his personal opinion regarding effects of predators on the bird population.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm

Thursday, September 12, 8:30 AM

Members and staff met at the Glasgow Field Office for the Hi-Line Sagebrush Anchor Landscape Tour.

Meeting adjourned at Noon

Final Approval:

Respectively approved and submitted for the record,

Perri Jacobs, Chairperson MBRAC

Trish Tonn, Vice Chairperson MBRAC

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