



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Colorado Northwest Resource Advisory Council (NW RAC) Meeting Minutes

August 22, 2024

Location: Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO)

RAC Members:

Name	Location	Cat.	Interest Represented
Mike Camblin (absent)	Maybell	I	Federal Grazing
Scott Braden	Grand Junction	III	Public-at-Large
Kathleen Steele	Grand Junction	III	Public-at-Large
Callie H. Scritchfield	Meeker	II	Environmental Organizations
Jeff Comstock	Craig	I	Rights-of-Way Interests
Merrit Linke (Zoom)	Granby	III	Elected Official
Carl Conner	Grand Junction	II	Archaeological and Historical
Scott Robertson	Rangely	I	Federal Grazing
Kathy Chandler-Henry	Eagle	III	Elected Official
Kris Middendorf (absent)	Steamboat Springs	III	State Natural Resources
Hattie Johnson (Zoom)	Carbondale	II	Dispersed Recreation
Sean Burke (absent)	Fraser	II	Dispersed Recreation
Beatriz Soto Ruvalcaba (absent)	New Castle	II	Environmental Organizations
Shawn Brennan	Glenwood Springs	I	Energy and Mineral Development
Kirk Daehling	Rifle	I	Energy and Mineral Development

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Staff:

Name	Title	Office
Greg Larson	District Manager	Upper Colorado River District Office
Doug Vilsack (Zoom)	State Director	Colorado State Office
Erin Jones	Acting Field Manager	Colorado River Valley Field Office
Michael Sarhan	Acting Associate District Manager	Upper Colorado River District Office
James Michels	Associate District Manager	Northwest District Office
Isaac Pittman	Assistant Field Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Stacy Colón	Field Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Hunter Siem	Assistant Field Manager	Little Snake Field Office
Steve Leonard	Field Manager	Kremmling Field Office
Chris Domschke	Acting Assistant Field Manager	Kremmling Field Office
Andy Borek	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Kremmling Field Office
Bill Mills	Field Manager	White River Field Office
Tyrell Tuner	Rangeland Management Specialist	Northwest District Office
Heather Marsh	Public Affairs Specialist	Upper Colorado River District Office

Tim Finger (Zoom)	Recreation Program Lead	Colorado State Office
Matt Heinritz	Acting NCA Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Lynae Rogers	Wild Horse and Burro Coordinator	Colorado State Office
JD Emerson	Public Affairs Specialist	Northwest District Office
Sara Jurca	Range Technician	Grand Junction Field Office
Joy von Guerard	Range Technician	Grand Junction Field Office

Public Attendees

Name	Title
McKenna Farley (Zoom)	Representative Lauren Boebert's office

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Housekeeping, Introductions, and Opening Remarks

Presenters: Greg Larson, Upper Colorado District Manager and Designated Federal Official (DFO), Colorado Northwest Resource Advisory Council (NW RAC) members, Scott Braden, NW RAC Chair, BLM staff.

Greg Larson welcomed the attendees, facilitated introductions, provided an overview of the agenda and discussed logistics and housekeeping items for the hybrid meeting.

Scott Braden thanked the RAC for attending with their busy schedules and emphasized the importance of the diversity of the RAC.

Agenda Item: Review and Discuss the Field Trip

Greg Larson opened the floor for discussion and questions about Land Health and the Public Lands Rule (PLR). Isaac Pittman reminded the RAC that the PLR is scaling the reporting from the allotment level to the watershed level and said we're looking forward to seeing how this influences NEPA and land recovery efforts.

Katie Steele said she wants more information on how everything ties together in the Land Health data collection process. Joy von Guerard responded by explaining how each method gives information relating to soil/site stability, biotic integrity and hydrologic function; and that this data is used along with supplemental data to produce a land health determination.

Scott Robertson said he hopes that integrating this new process will be more efficient and we will produce more land health assessments. Isaac Pittman responded by saying that he is excited to move away from getting bogged down in the extensive data collection and that will allow us to tease out areas of concern to focus time and money.

Callie Scritchfield asked about how remote sensing data will be incorporated to the reports. Joy von Guerard responded that statistical analysis had been performed on 20 years of remote sensing and that provided trend information on indicators such as shrub cover and bare ground. Callie Scritchfield asked about recreation and oil and gas. Bill Mills responded saying there are a lot of questions for the expanded Colorado Leadership Team (ECOLT) and we're doing a series of webinars in the coming weeks. Greg Larson added that land health assessments could for instance inform future stipulations for leases as well as master development plans. Callie Scritchfield clarified by saying this will potentially influence the placement of O&G pads.

Shawn Brennan talked about the subjectivity of the data collection and data quality when it came to soil pit evaluations and asked why we were not sending it into a lab for testing.

Jeff Comstock responded that they should not be as concerned about the soil pit as its just checking the soils to correlate to the vegetation type, but that he is concerned about misuse of data and added we need to clearly say how the data is useful and not useful.

Carl Connor was impressed that the technology being used is speeding us up in LHA then spoke about how impressive oil and gas developments over the last 5-10 years have been, gaining the ability to drill 5 miles from a pad. Connor added that he has heard an 8-10 acre pad with 20 wells off of it now.

Callie Scritchfield asked about conservation leases and whether they will they be focused in areas not meeting standards and asked who they will be leased to. She described several options of leasing including the rancher changing use, oil and gas doing a riparian project to mitigate use elsewhere. BLM staff clarified the leases will be for mitigation and restoration. Greg Larson responded saying that this is an effort to bring more funding to mitigation and restoration to supplement our appropriated funding. Larson asked members of the RAC to tell us about interested parties in the leasing.

Katie Steele said she has concerns about accountability and added you can determine problems and issues and there are ways of holding permittees and lease holders accountable however there is no way for recreationalist to be held accountable and we need more boots on the ground to manage recreation.

Scott Robertson asked how do you incorporate the data post fire? Joy von Guerard responded by saying fire is expected within the natural systems and we give it time to come back dependent on the fire cycle in that ecosystem. Steve Leonard said this watershed level engagement is a larger scale process and we are just gaining more information quicker, with few changes in the rest of the process.

Carl Conner brought attention to chaining and the impacts of continued chaining and was specifically concerned with piles of old growth that he has seen.

Agenda Item: North Sandhills Recreation Area business plan discussion

Presenters: Andy Borek, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Kremmling Field Office; Steve Leonard, Field Manager, Kremmling Field Office

Greg Larson began the discussion with a brief overview explaining that this is a discussion about a fee proposal, but that the field office is not seeking approval today.

Jeff Comstock wanted to know what feedback the RAC has presented that cannot be implemented. Steve Leonard explained that a lack of resources is a limiting factor on the abilities to implement everything that they would like to include and a mix of BLM and state lands complicates the process on managing the area.

Andy Borek gave a presentation with the intent of simplifying the business plan proposal for the RAC. It included a discussion of the current conditions and the plans for future management with the intent to determine if the plan will work and general approval from the RAC. North Sandhills is located in Jackson County and is a wind driven system that includes opportunities for off road vehicle use on sand dunes. BLM administers the majority of the sand hills environment, but most camping is located on adjacent state lands. Having a fee structure simply based on camping is difficult due to state lands. The sand hills have roughly 60,000 visitors per year and have seen a 5% increase each year. Most use is seen on holiday weekends in an area is near 2,000 acres and will see 3,000-5,000 visitors on high use weekends which causes access issues for emergency vehicles due to crowding. Most use is seen from June-September, but and increase during hunting season is occurring. The majority of visitors are from the front range.

What is Working:

Protection for the dune environment is occurring using boundary fencing to protect sensitive areas, however, shifting sands are often impacting the fencing. Typically, maintenance occurs every other weekend to keep areas closed off from the OHV open area. CSU has been completing research in North Sand Creek to look at sedimentation and other riparian impacts.

Challenges in management:

Health and safety is increasingly difficult and OHV use presents a set of dangers for recreators. On holiday weekends, there are often many fire/rescue needs, and usually at least one medflight needed in the area from Jackson County Fire/Rescue. On multiple occasions, Jackson County sheriff has needed riot gear to disperse crowds to handle issues such as domestic violence and firearm use in camping areas. A rural area is seeing impacts of concentrated groups of people and challenges that come with that. The only way to manage the area currently are coming from CPW grants due to shrinking federal budgets. There is significant noncompliance in OHV registration. New OHV users are not registering machines and it is estimated at 75% non-registration in the Sandhills area. There is only one ranger and it takes 1-2 hours' worth of paperwork when issuing a ticket for no registration, so it is impossible for the ranger to complete all work necessary. The sand dunes area is an Instant Wilderness Study Area, however, this area does not meet the requirements for a WSA and this is a management challenge.

Current Actions:

Staffing the area for every holiday weekend. BLM staff make sure to ask recreators if they have a registration and many do not but there are not the resources to enforce. Bi-lingual signage is being added to reach more recreators. BLM web-based information is being updated, however, KFO has not had a designated GIS specialist for five years so map creation is difficult. Facility maintenance occurs often.

Proposal for an entrance fee:

Camping fees cannot be implemented by BLM as camping is on state lands. Basic entrance fee structure: \$10 per vehicle per day. \$25 for 3-day pass. All fees will be spent on the site for benefit of users with health and safety as primary needs. No additional camping facilities are planned at this time. In the future, an automatic fee station would be preferable as keeping cash on-site would leave an opening for vandalism and theft as this has occurred in the past. A standalone unit costs \$8,000-\$10,000 for purchase and installation and \$2,500 to operate per year. Rec.gov is not an option due to lack of facilities that would meet the needs of a rec.gov fee site.

Potential management improvements:

Safety- CPW could possibly give seasonal LEOs as BLM cannot hire seasonal LEOs
Visitor information Services- BLM could hire additional seasonal or tern rec staff to improve onsite and off-site presence to target proper travel management and OHV regulations. Especially having staff for Saturdays and Sundays.

Kirk Daehling asked if this proposal is similar to a permit system and added that fees may help with infrastructure, but probably won't limit recreators. Andy Borek responded by saying there would need to be enforcement and is hoping that fees will be helpful to get enforcement going.

Callie Scritchfield would like to have seen the state or CPW assist with presentation and asked how are they assisting with creating solutions? Steve Leonard responded that BLM/CPW are looking at how the state can assist with management and find the best path forward to do the right thing for lands and recreators and looking into how assistance can more be gotten on the weekends with more funding.

Callie Scritchfield asked if the fee is per OHV or vehicle? Andy Borek described that most recreators have more than one vehicle, such as an OHV trailer that may have multiple machines, and a truck and trailer and that it is easier to track compliance on parked vehicles for rangers.

Callie Scritchfield also asked if CPW is enforcing registration then they should have more funds to assist BLM? She also wanted to know why there is so much paperwork for LEOs when they give a ticket for lack of OHV registration. Andy Borek explained that the Forest Service has a digital system for citations that will automatically update but BLM's system is not digitized so officers must enter information from the paper ticket. If process was streamlined, it would be much easier for officers to enforce policies.

Callie Scritchfield also wants to know how this will be fixed and that would need to be done at the national BLM level. Steve Leonard stated that on a holiday weekend, OHV registration is not the top concern, and that there are bigger safety concerns present that resources are more focused on such as illegal blackwater dumping and underage operation of vehicles. LEOs can be writing tickets for lack of registration or can be responding to emergencies. Andy Borek mentioned that LEOs need to be more focused on operating under the influence and emergency issues and there is not currently a good solution or answer on how to handle lack of registration issues.

Jeff Comstock said Andy Borek's presentation was frustrating because the focus was only on health and safety and in the past, they have seen presentations about creation of campgrounds and the RAC has approved in the past the fee structure. Comstock feels it is a back track from past meetings and does not believe that is where BLM should be spending the majority of their time, and the RAC has helped in the past with creating a comprehensive fee plan. Comstock said he would like to see those plans brought back and wants to know what has been lost. Steve Leonard mentioned that camping is not on BLM but Jeff Comstock says that in the past there were plans for a partnership agreement with CPW to accommodate camping needs.

Steve Leonard explained that this is a plan to get a simple fee structure implemented to begin the process of implementation. It would be a multi-million project to create campgrounds. The fee structure is simply a starting place and can be increased as needed. This is a plan to get the ball rolling on fees and enforcement and then plans can be made to construct more facilities. Andy Borek mentioned that Little Sahara charges \$10 and the sand dunes do not have the facilities to justify a higher fee.

Jeff Comstock said he cannot support the \$10 fee because it does not align with past RAC discussions.

Tim Finger said this is the first step of a sequence and the goal is still what the RAC gave the BLM. In the current operation, fees will get BLM to being proactive instead of reactive. BLM would gain ability to do outreach to public to educate on resource damage. It is a step in the right direction with CPW and RAC input. It is the only sand dune with motorized recreation in Colorado and he has been saying for 10 years that a fee structure needs to be looked into for the area. Funding has not been able to be increased yet and this is the first step to doing that. Intention is taking management actions in the direction that is

needed to move forward.

Doug Vilsack explained that the long-term vision has included RAC input and CPW partnerships. As others have mentioned, this is a first step and there is still a need to increase resources. North Sandhills does need a fee structure and a way to give the public information about this proposed fee. Making progress should include gathering public comments about the \$10 fee. This is a good place to start with public comment and then move forward. Vilsack asked how can this area be made into a top-notch recreational area in Colorado which will include partnerships with the state, OHV groups, and other public interest groups. The state and others likely have more resources available than BLM, in the short term, to build more facilities such as campgrounds and the future vision is still being discussed.

Scott Robertson said he understands that this recreation area has met its threshold and a step along with a fee structure would be a reservation system. Having an entrance gate is needed to effectively manage the recreation and enforce policies. Limiting the number of people entering would be a useful tool. Tim Finger mentioned that there is only one entrance and exit but a carrying capacity study has not been completed yet and if that is something that should be moved forward with, it should be included in a plan for management of the area.

Kathy Chandler-Henry talked about limiting use and referenced the Hanging Lake reservation system in place there for accessing that area and how that seems to be working well to limit the number of recreationalists and could possibly be used in the Sandhills area. Andy Borek said that Jackson County does not currently have the resources that Glenwood Springs and Garfield County have to support that system.

Carl Conner agrees that online registration is a key element. He thinks a roundabout would be helpful to turn people around if they do not have a registration so the recreators can leave and go purchase a registration. Getting a fee schedule set up is important and explained that the recreators have expensive vehicles and could pay a higher fee to use this area. How could the RAC help with partnering with the state for this system? Tim Finger said that an online system provides a cost savings for labor because the system could be more automated. There would possibly need to be staff to protect the fee station as people do not always like to pay fees. Rec.gov works well for national visitors but most visitors are local, and the proposed system does not include an operational fee like rec.gov.

Katie Steele thinks the priority should be holding CPW to upping enforcement in the campgrounds. She proposed that there should be a penalty fee for people who do not have registrations. She also agrees that the fees are too low, and the time involved in increasing the fees is not sustainable.

Kirk Daehling brought up that the carrying capacity is not known and thinks that should be a priority. He acknowledged that OHV operation is dangerous but if there are other issues such as assaults, knives, and guns, that may be attributed to too many people being in that area. Tim Finger explained that HQ Recreation is going to need to be more heavily involved and they will be joining at the field office to see what is occurring. CPW will also be included, and the group will report on the progress and what has been learned. There need to be actions being taken to get the process rolling.

Scott Braden explained that the wilderness community agrees that this is not a wilderness issue, but the state land board has seen negative impacts of camping. There seems to have been little progress since

2011. He compared the North Sandhills to the recreation issues that are seen at Chatfield or Cherry Creek State Parks. The major human health and safety issues seen at the site beg for solutions. He would like to see higher fees but is willing to take the first step as long as there is a plan to move forward with partners.

Doug Vilsack agreed with Braden and would like to see agreement that starting at \$10 would be the place to start. He would like the RAC to create a vision for how they would like to see BLM work with partners. A partnership with CPW will likely include charging an entrance fee and is interested in the \$10 fee because it is the same as the adjacent State Forest State Park. He is happy to chat more about working with partners in the future. Braden suggested that with the health and safety issues occurring, if there is no action, it may be worth considering an emergency closure.

Jeff Comstock asked that Doug Vilsack not go to the public without having a larger plan in place. Comstock thinks that BLM should work with State Forest to raise fees jointly and that there should be a plan for event fees. It should be more comprehensive than \$10. Finger agrees that they will be discussing casual and commercial use.

Callie Scritchfield said that she is disappointed that the business plan is not here today if this has been discussed since 2011. She supports an emergency closure to determine carrying capacity and complete the business plan. Scritchfield and Comstock recommended having a complete package and support from Jackson County commissioners. Andy Borek's understanding is that limiting wilderness would be difficult for one person to propose due limiting recreational activities. Finger explained that BLM cannot preclude congress in designation or non-designation of a WSA. Erin Jones mentioned that the RAC did a resolution in 2011 that the instant study area designation should be removed.

Callie Scritchfield suggested that the RAC complete a resolution and that the BLM present a business plan to the RAC and there should be formalized partnerships included. Vilsack acknowledged that the business plan has the parts it needs and to address this, BLM needs clear direction form the RAC on how CPW and partners should be assisting. Finger said BLM wants to bring back a progress report ASAP but needs to get moving. His concern is completing a carrying capacity assessment will push implementation out further. It does need to be completed but the first step is getting HQ, State, and FO together to get the process moving.

Shawn Brennan said that the area clearly has too many people and maybe the capacity could be cut immediately. Finger explained that there needs to be a formal study to prove why there needs to be a cap on the capacity to support the decision.

Greg Larson and Doug Vilsack support the RAC giving a resolution because it will help BLM support need for partnerships and other assistance.

Callie Scritchfield brought forward, and Katie Steele seconded a resolution that supports partnership with state and county, presents a business plan with appropriate fees with reservation and permit scheme that initiates carrying capacity study, formalize report for release of instant study area based on 2011 support. The RAC would like this completed by the next meeting. A business plan should be presented at this time along with support from partners. The resolution passed unanimously.

Agenda Item: Planning Herd Management Areas update

Presenters: Lynae Rogers, Wild Horse and Burro Coordinator, BLM Colorado State Office
Tyrell Turner, Range Land Management Specialist (RMS), Northwest District Office

Lynae Roger gave an overview of the location and history of the Herd Management Areas/ Range/Herd Areas. This included information about appropriate management levels for each herd and the current population along with when the most recent gather occurred and if there are plans for another gather.

Tyrell Turner described the bait trapping occurring in the Sand Wash Basin HMA and said none have been caught at the time of the meeting, but he is hopeful on the progress. Once horses have been captured, they are transferred to a temporary holding corral before being moved to Canon City.

Jeff Comstock voiced support for Tyrell's actions and is wondering why the population is not be reduced to below Appropriate Management Level (AML). Tyrell explained that this is the beginning of a multiple year plan. Callie Scritchfield asked if any of the horses in Wyoming are travelling across the state line. Tyrell mentioned that it does appear that some horses are travelling across and they are working with Wyoming to remove those horses.

Lynae Rogers described the WH&B vision for Colorado. These goals are to achieve AML on all HMAs, maintain AML through fertility control, pursue healthy rangelands, pursue productive partnerships, and recognize current partnerships, and adopt as many horses in state as possible. Partnerships are an essential part of accomplishing projects on the group and are very important for our darting efforts. Meeker Mustang Makeover has received a 5-year Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for their events. Friends of the Mustangs are a volunteer partner group that assist with range developments, darting and census. Adoption events include horses from Colorado and other States and the Online Adoption Event is a program that makes horses available for adoption nationally. Our partners are aging and there is not a lot of recruitment in those groups.

Lynae Rogers explained that Colorado has multiple logistical constraints that impact the ability to support operations. There are limited BLM staff to complete on and off range operations. There are limited partnerships and ability to acquire off-range holding capacity led to needs for funding. Colorado has applied 150 of the 471 fertility treatments applied nationally. There is a national goal of placing 20,000 horses and burros into private care. Off-range pastures are full at present so private care placements are extremely important. We have had seven placement events in the state so far this year.

Lynae Rogers explained that state office vision is having all HMAs within AML. We are looking at a science and authorization to utilize AI to recognize horses for census and fertility control administration.

Kirk Daehling mentioned a constraint that was previously identified was requirements for adoptions that the facility needs were onerous. Lynae responded that the private facility requirements have not changed. Steve Leonard says that the roof shelter requirement has been

changed to allow for windbreaks or other facilities in areas with less inclement weather.

Scott Robertson recommended that it should be high priority to continue to zero out the West Douglas Herd. Lynae Rogers responded that is a high priority area.

Katie Steel asked if horse area populations are growing quickly why is the range in Tres Rios within AML? Lynae responded that TJ is a great darter and has a smaller area with easier terrain. Other ranges are much larger with rugged terrain, along with having more elusive horses.

Callie Scritchfield asked how is APHIS getting paid? Lynae Rogers replied through the state working group. Callie Scritchfield then asked how many horses in the Canon City facility and who is managing it? Lynae Rogers responded there are 1,800 horses and Wayne Tachera is managing the Canon City facility, this year we will likely fill the facility with gathers from this year.

Jeff Comstock was concerned about the AML numbers stating the rangelands are decimated and just dropping to the top of AML is not what we need for good rangeland management it needs to be brought to the low end of AML to allow for rangelands to recover. Lynae Rogers responded we are having discussions about land health and we will be using bait trapping to continue to reduce numbers to mid to low AML. The Sand Wash gather number was set before the horse census was complete. Hunter Siem added that we are in year one of a three-year forage production study for Sand Wash Basin

Scott Braden asked about the number of off range horses and who is paying for the long-term holding. Lynae responded that is a separate budget, all stallions are gelded on off range pastures, older horses and horses with three or more strikes are sent to off range pastures. We have sales authority to reduce the number of three strike or 10 year or older horses can be immediately purchased.

Doug Vilsack said we have the opportunity to have all four HMAs within AML and then we can work on smaller gathers and fertility control to remain within mid AML.

Callie Scritchfield thanks BLM for working to reduce horse numbers and stated that the according to the Wild Horse and Burro Act, the 60,000 horses that are in long-term holding should be sold at local auction, however the Appropriations Act says that we shall not sell or euthanize horses for commercial purposes, so the laws are conflicting.

Scott Robertson asked if Rio Romo Ranch is an off-range pasture? Lynae Rogers replied it is a private facility.

Callie Scritchfield commented that the Colorado State Wild Horse Working Group is in Meeker next week and the state is considering a holding facility as some sort of state preserve on the Western Slope of Colorado.

Isaac Pittman commented that there is a new website called Stock Smart that does forage production calculations it is fairly accurate when compared to a two-year forage survey he conducted in the CRVFO and could help with area planning.

Callie Scritchfield said she is excited to see the results intense monitoring effort of utilization monitoring cages and associated game cams in her area between 2021-23 after the removal of 767 horses and now they are seeing double the wildlife.

Scott Robertson followed up saying for the first time, mule deer stayed within the West Douglas Herd Area last winter.

Agenda Item: Field Manager Updates

Presenters: Steve Leonard, Kremmling Field Office (KFO) Manager; Bill Mills, White River Field Office (WRFO) Manager; Hunter Siem, Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) Assistant Field Manager; Greg Larson, Upper Colorado River (UCRD) District Manager; Erin Jones, Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) Manager (Acting); Stacey Colón, Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) Manager; Matt Heinritz, NCA Manager (Acting) for McInnis Canyons NCA (MCNCA) and Dominguez Escalante NCA (DENCA) (Acting); RAC members.

Packets include updates from Field Managers. Field Managers and the RAC discussed current events in the field across the spectrum of land management programs. One clarification of the publication of Supplemental Rules is that these were decisions made in RMPs that have been delayed in the administrative procedure of getting them published in the Federal Register, not new decisions.

KFO- Blue Valley land exchange request for stay was denied and Steve Leonard is hoping the exchange can be completed by December for spring riparian restoration work. KFO is implementing business plan. There were no questions from the RAC.

WRFO- The Meeker Mustang Makeover is this upcoming weekend if any attendees are interested in a trained horse. Recreation program is obtaining funding to be more aggressive with the rec program. WRFO is short staffed in the range program, one RMS retired, one RMS promoted, one RMS remains so the office scaling back range work at this time and recruiting locally for new hires. The oil and gas program is focused on plugging orphaned wells, the Buffalo Horn land exchange had the request for stay denied. There were no questions from the RAC.

LSFO- Gateway South and Transwest transmission lines projects are slowing as their Lands & Realty Specialist is leaving, reclamation occurring on old transmission lines. Transwest Express work will start in the spring. Sage grouse projects and riparian restoration is ongoing. Outcome based grazing project permit is in place and LSFO is developing training modules for outcome based grazing permits. There was a clarifying question asking if the Gateway South and Transwest transmission lines were in parallel to each other? Yes, they'll be within 300 Feet of each other and within the footprint of a previous lines.

UCRD- Stacey Colón is the new GJFO Field Manager, Erin Jones is the acting Field Manager thru September in CRVFO. Supplemental EIS for O&G final EIS is issued, Greg Larson feels we have received good feedback across all cooperators, not leasing in low or no known potential. There were no questions from the RAC.

GJFO- There will be a gather in the Little Bookcliffs Wild Horse Range (LBCWR) next month. 27 of 32 planned miles in North Fruita Desert Extensive Recreation Management Area (NFD ERMA) have been completed along with 22 new campsites. ADA Requests for e-bike use have a process in place, and we've seen a handful of those individual requests. NFD has e-bikes blanket authorized. NEPA has been initiated for the Clifton parcel that is proposed to be transferred to Mesa County.

MCNCA- has had many starts this fire season with the largest being the 1,500-acre Rabbit Valley fire, the Emergency Stabilization Rehabilitation (ESR) plan includes herbicide application to be more proactive about cheatgrass establishment and expansion. The Rabbit Valley Campground plan is being implemented and we have more staffing in the area. Kathy Chandler-Henry asked if the recreation area is nearing its use capacity? Matt Heinritz responded that it is busy, but staff are planning on increased presence the area as the fall busy season comes on.

DENCA- Gunnison River campsites are self-issued permits and reservable campsites are expected by next river season, the business plan is going out today,

The Conservation Fund purchased the Escalante Ranch on July 15th and the community engagement process will be initiated for planning for the area. We are slowing down our purchase from The Conservation Fund as recommended by the Joint RAC and we have committees planning all of the different aspects of our management for a successful "day one" of the lands coming into public ownership. BLM requests a subcommittee be formed similar to the DENCA subcommittee, that will be initiated by the SW RAC.

RAC Questions- What's going on with ag lands in the acquisition? BLM responded that they are all leased for active hay production or intermittent grazing. Who's interested in partnering to manage the ag lands? BLM Staff respond that TNC has history of private land management and is managing the finding of partners in the interim, interest from current lessees, other operators, CPW.

Carl Conner commented of the ag fields being important to the local big horn sheep. Greg Larson responded that a contractor is evaluating the fields to establish which ones are most productive and should be considered to have agriculture maintained on them.

The RAC question of when parcels will be purchased by BLM. BLM staff said that ownership to the public is expected to occur in summer of 2025.

Scott Robertson is concerned about TNCs management of other properties in the nearby area and hopes that the same doesn't happen here.

The RAC questioned what will happen to the Cabin Wall Climbing Route that is currently on private? BLM Staff responded that we will evaluate the climbing routes as part of the recreation plan for the area; the cliffs are generally open with the exception of something like raptor nest presence or rock art.

If we can manage like adjacent BLM we will, however there are some special situations like

travel management & Ag Land Management.

RAC members stated again how important the ag fields are for wildlife.

Kathy Chandler-Henry commented that in Eagle County they manage 1,500 acres up Brush Creek that is being leased to a cow calf operation and kept in alfalfa production. She feels the project could be a good example for BLM to draw management ideas from.

CRVFO- Carrying capacity study for upper Colorado ERMA, Supplementary rules for CRVFO, GJFO, KFO, DENCA in the federal register soon. Andersons Camp direct sale is occurring, selling 8-acre parcel along the Colorado river to resolve a trespass. O&G plugging is very busy. Hosted Foundation for Americas Public Lands to talk about virtual fencing. Foundation for Americas Public Lands is the primary friends' group of BLM as designated by Congress.

Greg Larson also mentioned that management structure for BLM law enforcement officers (LEOs) is changing and there will now be four supervisory LEOs across Colorado to support law enforcement across the state.

The comment of the virtual fencing tour brought up a lot of questions by the RAC. The main take aways from the conversation were that there are many companies with virtual fencing and BLM staff present at the meeting were only aware of one company that we have purchased virtual fencing base stations from and that they are in use in multiple field offices. It was asked if BLM could provide tech support for grazing permittees on the computer side of things and BLM Staff responded that BLM would maintain the towers to establish a virtual fencing network but technical support for the software would need to come from the company.

For the complete report, see Northwest Resource Advisory Council Field Manager Updates, August 2024.

Agenda Item: Public Comment Period

No public comments were received.

Scott Braden reminded BLM to reach out to the senator and congressional offices to invite them to the public comment period.

Agenda Item: Closing Remarks and Open Discussion

Presenters: Greg Larson Colorado River District Manager; Scott Braden, NW RAC Chair; BLM staff, RAC members.

JD Emerson updated the RAC on their term expiration dates, Katie Steele - January 2025, Scott Braden and Jeff Comstock - April 2025, Kirk Daehling - November 2025. Emerson said nomination timeframes will be sent out as soon as they are known. RAC members and BLM Staff discussed how RAC terms and appointments work.

Carl Connor commented that for the last couple years walking thru the woods in project areas,

and wondered what the procedures will be for the chaining slash. BLM staff commented that we recently allowed a resource benefit fire in the Wagon Park allotment to help clean up some of these piles.

Scott Braden invited RAC members to make comments.

Scott Robertson asked if Land Health Assessments are informing fuels treatments on where PJ is encroaching on sagebrush ecosystems. Joy von Guerard responded, yes our land health documents will inform fuels project planning and NEPA. Callie Scritchfield mentioned that you can use the RAP tool to watch the PJ encroach over time with the slider bar.

Katie Steele asked about how the FLREA is impacting the RAC process. Greg Larson replied that BLM will continue to come to the RAC to scope, then plans will go the Washington Office and legal review, then plans will go out for public comment, and back to the RAC for final approval. Larson said the change puts the RAC at the end, however we will be bringing ideas to the RAC for initial discussion but without any approval at the initial planning stage.

Callie Scritchfield commented that she appreciates the issue of the old chaining slash and wonders if we can do prescribed burns there. She states that Rejuvra is amazing, and BLM should get the NEPA complete so it can be used soon. She also brought up that she is seeing successes when BLM is partnering with the conservation districts in her area. She explained that conservation districts have the statutory authority to work with the federal government and encourages us to utilize them to administer funds and expand projects.

Jeff Comstock added that Moffat County was “burned” in the Transwest Express ROW process because NFWF was used instead of the local conservation districts to administer funding. Callie Scritchfield expounded that more money gets on the ground thru conservation district as there is less funding going to administrative costs. This is a Colorado BLM problem, and it might be time for the RAC to recommend that we not use national organizations for the implementation of funds.

Greg Larson thanked Scott Braden for his facilitation.

Scott Braden was grateful for the meeting today and said it was very helpful and he believes we have moved the needle on some of the issues presented today.

A Federal Register Notice is needed to cover meetings for the entire next fiscal year of the agendas so a date for the next RAC meeting was not set, there is hope that it can happen before April.

Subcommittees can be formed to further research issues and provide advice to the RAC to consider for advising to BLM.

Agenda Item: Adjourn

Meeting adjourned by Chairman Scott Braden at 3:03 p.m.