

Bureau of Land Management – Wyoming Resource Advisory Council Meeting

10/18/23-10/19/23 Rawlins, WY

RAC Coordinator: Azure Hall

Name	City	Interest Represented	Term Expires	Present	Notes
Jennifer Leinonen	Casper	Energy/Minerals	12/25	Y	
Colin McKee	Cheyenne	Energy/Minerals	12/25	Y	
Craig Rood	Green River	Energy/Minerals	1/24	Y	
Mel Shumway	Afton	Dispersed Recreation	1/24	Y	
Michael Massie	Laramie	Archeology	4/26	Y	
John Espy	Rawlins	Elected Officials	1/24	Y	
Josh Coursey	Kemmerer	Dispersed Recreation	4/26	Y	
Stephanie Kessler	Lander	Public-at-Large	4/26	Y	
Mary Thoman	Green River	Elected Official	12/25	Y	

Name	Title	Office	Present
Kevin Christensen	HP District Manager	High Plains District	Y
Jason Gay	HD District Manager	High Desert District	Y
Matt Marsh	WR/BB District Manager	Wind River/Big Horn Basin District	Y
Kris Kirby	Associate State Director	State Office	N
Andrew Archuleta	State Director	State Office	Y
Azure Hall	Public Affairs	State Office	Y
Brad Purdy	Deputy State Director	State Office	Y
Travis Bargsten	Branch Chief	State Office	Y
Duane Spencer	Deputy State Director	State Office	N
Jennifer Fleuret-McConchie	Deputy State Director	State Office	N

Agenda Item: Welcome

Presenter: Andrew Archuleta

- RAC Member and BLM introductions
- Agenda Review

Agenda Item: Overview of Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision Process

Presenter: Jamie Halperin, BLM WY State Office Branch Chief for Planning, Recreation, and Physical Resources

Topic: BLM Directives

- Manual: <https://www.blm.gov/policy/manuals> > General Management Series, 1000 Series > MS-1221, Directives. Sets forth the policy regarding preparing, approving, distributing, and maintaining the various types of directives for BLM use. (November 1, 2018)

- Manuals document program-specific BLM policy and direction. Instructions in BLM manual sections are mandatory unless otherwise stated.
- Authority. Cite sources of authority that contain legal requirements for conducting the program involved.
- Responsibility. Beginning with the highest Bureau officials involved, list the principal officials by their titles who are responsible for planning and executing the program covered in the manual section. State the jurisdictional responsibilities of these officials.
- Policy. Provide general statements that outline the governing principles, course, and plan-of-action designed to govern present and future actions, decisions, or procedures. Handbooks provide detailed, technical, or procedural instructions needed to carry out the policy and direction described in the BLM manual section. The primary audience is specialists, technicians, and clerks.

Topic: Land Use Planning

- Manual: <https://www.blm.gov/policy/manuals> > General Management Series, 1000 Series > MS-1610 Land Use Planning (November 22, 2000)
- Handbook: <https://www.blm.gov/policy/handbooks> > General Management Series, 1000 Series > H-1610-1 Land Use Planning (March 11, 2005)
- Planning and NEPA in the BLM - <https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa>

Topic: RMP Monitoring and Evaluation (43 CFR 1610.4-9)

- The Field Manager shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the plan in accordance with the established intervals and standards and at other times as appropriate to determine whether there is sufficient cause to warrant amendment or revision of the plan.
- RMPs evaluated to determine if (WY SO IM 2020-020):
- Decisions remain relevant to current issues and resource conditions;
- Decisions are effective in achieving (or making progress toward achieving) desired outcomes;
- Decisions need to be changed through revision, amendment, or maintenance;
- Mitigation measures are satisfactory;
- There are significant changes in the related plans of other entities; and,

Topic: RMP Revision process

- A resource management plan shall be revised as necessary, based on monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy and changes in circumstances affecting the entire plan or major portions of the plan. Revisions shall comply with all of the requirements of these regulations for preparing and approving an original resource management plan.
- Public comment period
 - At least 90 days
 - Substantive and nonsubstantive comments

- BLM Wyoming Planning and NEPA: link to interactive web map of RMP's in Wyoming - <https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/plans-in-development/wyoming>

Agenda Item: Overview of Area of Critical Environmental Concern designation and review process

Presenter: Jamie Halperin, BLM WY State Office Branch Chief for Planning, Recreation, and Physical Resources

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

- Overview and list of current ACECs: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/planning-101/special-planning-designations/acec>
- Manual: <https://www.blm.gov/policy/manuals> > General Management Series, 1000 Series > MS-1613, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (September 29, 1988)
- No Handbook
- Headquarters Instruction Memorandum 2023-013: Clarification and Interim Guidance for Consideration of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Designations in Resource Management Plans and Amendments; <https://www.blm.gov/policy/im-2023-013> (Expires: 09/30/2026)
- 43 CFR 1610.7-2 Designation of areas of critical environmental concern: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-43/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-1600/subpart-1610/section-1610.7-2>
- Areas having potential for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation and protection management shall be identified and considered throughout the resource management planning process.
 - 1) The inventory data shall be analyzed to determine whether there are areas containing resources, values, systems or processes or hazards eligible for further consideration for designation as an ACEC. In order to be a potential ACEC, both of the following criteria shall be met:
 - a. Relevance. There shall be present a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish or wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard.
 - b. Importance. The above-described value, resource, system, process, or hazard shall have substantial significance and values. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property.
 - 2) The State Director, upon approval of a draft resource management plan, plan revision, or plan amendment involving ACECs, shall publish a notice in the Federal Register listing each ACEC proposed and specifying the resource use limitations, if any, which would occur if it were formally designated. The notice shall provide a 60-day period for public comment on the proposed ACEC designation. The approval of a resource management plan, plan revision, or plan amendment constitutes formal designation of any ACEC involved. The approved plan shall include the general management

practices and uses, including mitigating measures, identified to protect designated ACEC.

Current BLM Wyoming ACEC's per Field Office by designation.

Field Office (RMP Year)	Fish / Wildlife	Historic / Cultural / Scenic	Natural Hazard	Natural Process / System	Total
Buffalo (2015)		1	1		2
Casper (2007)	1			1	2
Cody (2015)	4	1	1	3	9
Kemmerer (2010)		1		3	4
Lander (2014)	5	2		1	7
Newcastle (1999)		1			1
Pinedale (2008)	2	1		1	4
Rawlins (2008)	2	1			3
Rock Springs (1997)	1	7		2	10
Worland (2015)		2		2	4
Total	15	17	2	13	46

Agenda Item: Update and Discussion of Rock Springs RMP Revision

Presenter: Kimberlee Foster, Rock Springs Field Manager

- Resource Management Plans are the land use plans that BLM uses to manage the BLM-administered lands in the Field Office.
- The Rock Springs Field Office manages 3.6 million acres of federal surface and 3.7 million acres of federal mineral estate.
- The last RMP for this area was completed in 1997.
- Rock Springs Field Office RMP major components: Special Designations and Management Areas, Fluid Minerals, Solid Leasable Minerals, Locatable Minerals, Existing Withdrawals, Salable Minerals, Right-of-Way Exclusion & Avoidance, Renewable Energy, Visual Resource Management
- Summary of EIS Alternatives
- Overview of ACECs proposed and changes to resource uses in Alternatives A and B
- Overview of public comment process
- RAC inquired as to if we can put out a correction of travel management error on Page 4 of RMP
- One RAC member suggested that we pull entire RMP due to Sage Grouse, Wild Horse & Burro, travel management, and grazing not being included.
- RAC requested extension on RMP's comment period

Topic: What are Substantive comments

- Questions, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the EIS
- Questions, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis
- Presents new information relevant to the analysis
- Causes changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives

Agenda Item: Presentation on the BLM Wild Horse & Burro Program

Presenter: June Wedlandt, Wild Horse & Burro Specialist

Topic: Explanation of 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses & Burros Act and Program history

- This law authorizes the BLM to remove excess wild horses and burros from the range to sustain health and productivity to achieve the BLM's multiple use mandate.
- Overview of 16 herd management areas (HMA) in WY and explanation of Appropriate Management Levels (AML)
- Population is estimated at 8,181 horses (WY is well-suited to care for between 2,490 and 3,725 horses)
- To protect the health of the land and to support healthy horses and burros, the BLM works to achieve in each HMA what is known as the Appropriate Management Level (AML) – the point at which wild horse and burro populations are consistent with the land's capacity to support them and other mandated uses of those lands, including protecting ecological processes and habitat for wildlife and livestock.
- The AML for each HMA ranges from a minimum population level to a maximum population level to allow for population growth over a four- to five-year period.
- The BLM establishes an AML through the evaluation and analysis of rangeland resource and population data spanning several years, including data relating to vegetation and soil types, weather and water quality.
- The AML for each HMA is set in an open, public process through field office planning efforts.

Topic: Presentation of Wyoming Holding Facilities

Rock Springs Wild Horse Holding Facility

- It is the only federal owned off-range corral and preparation facility in Wyoming.
- The facility houses approximately 800 wild horses, primarily gathered from Wyoming herd management areas.
- The facility also serves as a rest stop location for wild horses being transported eastbound from western states.
- A viewing kiosk overlooking the facility is also open year-round.

Wheatland Off Range Corral

- A privately owned, BLM contracted, more than 100-acre facility dedicated to the housing of between 500 and 3,500 wild horses and burros.
- It serves as a preparation center for wild horses and burros gathered from overpopulated herd management areas.
- Additionally, the facility can also serve as a rest stop location for wild horses being transported eastbound from western states.

Elm Creek Wild Horse and Burro Corrals

- The Wild Horse and Burro Corrals at Elm Creek has been in place since 1994.
- Elm Creek is the mid-states resting point for animals on their journey to either Off-Range Pastures in the mid-west or adoption events in the mid-west to the east coast.
- The Elm Creek facility can house up to 500 animals but has an average population of 350-450 animals year-round.

Mantle Wild Horse Training & Adoption Center

- Mantle Ranch cares for approximately 200 head of mixed-age and gender of horses.
- The facility offers on-site, and in-person adoptions by appointment.
- Their training methods involve simple safety, patience and consistency as the top priorities. They spend time observing the horses' behavior, and then develop a training plan for each horse based on their specific needs.

Wyoming Honor Farm

- The Wyoming Honor Farm, Riverton, Wyoming, is classified as a minimum custody facility and is part of the Wyoming Department of Corrections.
- The BLM and the Honor Farm have worked cooperatively since 1988 to train and adopt wild horses gathered from Wyoming.
- Trainers and wild horses make positive strides together by learning to respect and trust each other and men are transitioned in a positive way back into society.
- The Wyoming Department of Corrections has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the nation, in large part due to the meaningful work accomplished by Honor Farm inmates, including the gentling of wild horses.

Deerwood Ranch Wild Horse Public Off-Range Pasture

- 4,000 acre family-owned ranch
- Approximately 30 miles west of Laramie, in southwest Wyoming
- Long-term, humane care for up to 350 wild horses

Topic: Overview of BLM Wild Horse & Burro Budget

National Wild Horse & Burro

- National budget had \$157,828,02.50 in Fiscal Year 2023 as of 10/1/22 with off-range pastures and corrals making up 34% and 35%, respectively.
- Placement into private care made up 5%
- Plan for herd management and construction/maintenance both made up less than 1%
- Program support made up 17%
- Compliance inspections and conduct census each made up 1%
- Monitoring of herd management and population growth suppression each made up 2% and gathers made up 3%

BLM Wyoming Wild Horse & Burro

- Wyoming budget had \$10,054,120 in Fiscal Year 2023 with off-range corrals making up for 85%
- Placement into private care made up 4%
- Plan for herd management, compliance inspections, and construction/maintenance each made up less than 1%
- Program support made up 2%
- Population growth suppression and conduct census each made up 1%
- Monitoring of herd management made up 5%, and gathers made up 2%

Agenda Item: Election of RAC Chair and Vice Chair

- RAC voted on chairs and elected Jennifer Leinonen as Chair and Michael Massie as Vice Chair.

Agenda Item: District Updates

Presenter: District Managers

- **Topic: High Desert District**

LaBarge Watershed Project (IRA/BIL): The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), enacted \$905M for the Department of Interior Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) to restore America's natural infrastructure. The LaBarge project will be in support of BIL-Ecosystem Restoration's efforts to defend and grow sagebrush systems that create fire-resilient ecosystems and promote biodiversity. Currently there are significant watershed erosion problems in the LaBarge area of Sublette and Lincoln counties due to surface disruption by multiple use. The project is approximately 132,072-acres within the LaBarge/Big Piney area oil and gas field. Within the LaBarge Watershed Restoration Project area there are four additional areas of concern for restoration: Bird Draw Restoration, Birch Creek Low-Tech Restoration, Black Canyon Creek Watershed Restoration, and Yose Canyon Dam Removal.

Muddy Creek Restoration Landscape: The BLM will invest \$10 million from the Inflation Reduction Act to protect native vegetation and streams on public lands in

Wyoming. Muddy Creek, an important tributary of the Little Snake River, supports a rare community of native fish and the landscape holds core sagebrush habitat. Restoration investments will include fuels reduction, riparian and wetland enhancement, fence conversion and erosion control, all aimed at restoring natural ecologic function in the headwaters of the Colorado River basin.

Two Rivers Wind Energy Project (Blue Earth Resources): BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released the Two Rivers Wind Energy Project EA for a 30-day public comment period on November 9, 2022. The Two Rivers wind energy project is a 20,381-acre (4,507 acres of BLM managed lands) project located in the Rawlins Field Office. The project consists of 79 wind turbines, a 34.5 kV collection system, two 230 kV transmission lines and other project related infrastructure. Based upon additional site discoveries during the initial tribal consultations, it was determined that additional tribal surveys were needed. The additional surveys were conducted during late Aug. into Sept. An additional Tribal Consultation meeting is being planned. The development of a Programmatic Agreement between BLM, the proponent, and Tribes may be undertaken after further consultation. The Field Manager has decided that the EA will be going out for another public comment period.

- **Topic: High Plains District**

Marton Ranch Land Use Planning

The BLM purchased the 35,668-acre Marton Ranch in 2022 with funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, connecting 40k acres of existing BLM and State of Wyoming lands and creating a 75k-acre contiguous block of public land. Since the purchase, BLM has managed the property the same as adjacent BLM-managed lands, per existing management decisions. Through public input and cooperating agency coordination, the BLM will determine if changes are needed to existing management decisions applied to this area.

Newcastle and Nebraska RMP Revisions

The BLM Newcastle Field Office is preparing a resource management plan revision and associated environmental impact statement for BLM lands in Crook, Niobrara, and Weston Counties, Wyo., and the State of Nebraska.

Quarter Circle 7 Land Exchange

The BLM Buffalo Field Office is processing a land exchange proposal in northwest Campbell County. The BLM and the Quarter Circle 7 Ranch owner propose to exchange non-federal land for isolated federal parcels in two phases.

- **Topic: Wind River Bighorn Basin District**

Next Oil and Gas Lease Sale: Nov. 28

The following will be offered from the Wind River/Bighorn Basin District (WR/BBD) during the November 28 Wyoming Fourth Quarter 2023 Competitive Oil & Gas Lease Sale: Cody Field Office: 8 parcels, approx. 15,858 acres

Four of the eight parcels proposed to move forward in the sale have surface ownership other than BLM and are considered split estate. Landowner letters were sent out by the BLM State Office for both dwellings and split estate issues. During the lease parcel review process, no parcels were recommended for deletion or deferral.

Oil and Gas Well Plugging

The Cody and Worland field offices were expecting to plug 40 wells in fiscal year 2023 but plugged 51. The field offices estimate they will plug 40 in FY 2024. The Lander Field Office has plugged 28 wells so far in 2023, with 15 more expected to be plugged by the end of the year.

Wild Horse Fertility Control/Gather in the McCullough Peaks HMA

The CYFO issued a decision on Sept. 20, 2023, approving wild horse bait trap gathers, removals and fertility control in the McCullough Peaks Herd Management Area for the next ten years. The CYFO reviewed and responded to thousands of comments during both the public scoping period and the comment period on the environmental assessment. A bait trap gather is anticipated to begin in mid-November and continue through the winter.

Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) Project

CapturePoint Solutions proposes a CCS project near Lost Cabin in Fremont County. The LFO has reviewed and responded to the proponent's pore-space-only application and plan of development. After obtaining a Class IV permit from Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, CapturePoint submitted another application for the surface use and infrastructure. The project lies in Greater Sage-grouse priority habitat. The LFO is communicating with the proponent about the challenges that lie ahead with this proposed project.

Wild Horse Gather—North Lander Complex

The anticipated fall gather in the North Lander Wild Horse Complex was canceled due to a lack of national funding for the gather. The gather remains a high priority and the LFO and Wyoming State Office are prepared for whenever the opportunity arises.

The combined appropriate management level of the Complex is 320-536 horses; a survey conducted in August determined the population to be approximately 2,593 horses. The complex is almost entirely composed of Greater Sage-Grouse priority habitat and much of the area is categorized as winter/yearlong or crucial mule deer/pronghorn range.

Agenda Item: Public Comment Period

- One member of the public was in attendance but left before public comment period.
- No members of the public were in attendance virtually, although meeting was broadcasted via Zoom.

Agenda Item: Overview of BLM Land Exchange Process

Presenter: Travis Bargsten, BLM Branch Chief, Lands & Realty

- Purposes of land exchanges
 - Consolidate ownership
 - Community expansion
 - Acquire inholdings within special areas
 - Acquire and protect important resource values
 - Access for recreation or commodity development
- BLM authorities for undertaking land exchanges: FLPMA Sec. 206 (43 U.S.C. § 1716)
- BLM resources available to process land exchanges
 - BLM Personnel: Field Office, District Office, State Office, Headquarters Office
 - Budget: “To the extent possible, land exchanges, sales and purchases/ donations should be coded against benefitting sub-activities.”
 - L1440 (Lands, Realty, and Cadastral)
 - L3130/L3330 (Acquisition Management), L3111/L3311 (Land Acquisition) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) –these funds may be used for processing and management costs associated with donation and exchange, when these acquisitions are within and/or contiguous to a LWCF-funded project area
 - L7122 (Contributed Funds)
- Types of exchanges and interests conveyed
 - Interests exchanged
 - Parties involved
 - Exchange configuration
 - Transaction phasing
 - Legislation/authority for exchange
- Land exchange process
 - Feasibility report
 - Agreement to Initiate and Notice of Exchange Proposal
 - Segregation
 - NEPA compliance and RMP conformance
 - Notice of Decision
 - 45-Day Comment Period
 - Transfer and Final Title

Agenda Item: Topics for Future RAC Meetings/Action Items

Presenter: Chair, Jennifer Leinonen

Future Topics:

- 638 contracts and land exchanges
- Wind River Bighorn Basin recreation fee changes.
- RAC Chair will be coordinating with BLM Wyoming on future topics and agenda for next meeting.
- Next meeting date was requested for January 31 and February 1, 2024 in Casper, WY.
- Duration and topics of meeting TBD.

Action Items:

- RAC requested a list of acronyms used by the BLM
- RAC requested a standardized format for district updates, specifically with handouts
- RAC inquired as to feasibility of creating a RAC-only SharePoint site