

**EASTERN MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Sidney, Montana**  
**May 6, 2004**

**Attendance**

RAC: Marian Hanson, Jamie Byrne, Jack Bailey, Robert Lubbers, Betty Aye, Marty Ulrich, Mack Cole, Howard Boggess, Neta Old Elk, John Gibson, Charles Hauptman, Dave Smith.

BLM: David McIlnay, Sandy Brooks, Mark Jacobsen, Cody Helm.

***Field Manager Updates:***

**Sandy Brooks, BiFO-**

- We have had preliminary discussions with the subdivision developer in the Grove Creek area concerning a land exchange and/or acquisition of the area with the most critical wildlife and cultural issues. If an exchange is unworkable, they will move forward with an EIS concerning the right-of-ways applied for.
- We have completed 380 acres in the first treatment area at the Horse Thief Fuels Reduction Project. The BLM has a local buyer for the decks and has also started laying out the second treatment area, which will be 300 acres. The BLM has received an award for its efforts from the Secretary of Interior
- Pompey's Pillar had a ground breaking ceremony on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Around 100 people attended. Heavy equipment has been moved out to the Pompey's Pillar site. The project is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2005. Over 2000 school children are scheduled to tour the area this spring and more calls are coming in each day. Clark Days has been scheduled for the last weekend in July (24-25) which includes various activities such as a canoe float, pancake breakfast, bird hikes, camping, music, oral history, etc.
- The NRCS has completed the draft report on the carrying capacity and condition of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. BLM will be scheduling a meeting with USFS and NPS prior to providing the information to the public. There will be no wild horses gathered in the Pryor Mountains this year. The BLM will continue with immuno-contraception this summer.
- The Billings Field Office continues to work on OHV Travel Management Planning. The four areas high priority areas we are concentrating on are Shepherd Ah Nei, Pryor Mountains, Horsethief and Acton. Shepherd Ah Nei has heavy OHV use and BLM was sued by an adjacent private homeowner for

the noise and dust pollution. The outcome of the lawsuit was to temporarily close the Shepherd Ah Nei area. The Shepherd area will be closed to motorized vehicles through the summer, hopefully opening in November, but if not then, opening the following spring. The BLM will prioritize the area for trails and plans to have a scoping meeting June 7, 2004 where they will discuss the issues for the Travel Management Plan.

- The BLM has already entered the fire season. Red flag warnings were being issued in the Billings area around the fourth of May. The Billings Field Office is preparing for an early fire season. The Billings Field Office is also sending out drought letters for all permittees, explaining the possibility of delaying turnout or shortening the season-of-use.

### **David McInay, MCFO-**

- Regarding Coal Bed Natural Gas, the Miles City Field Office (MCFO) has issued an approval on 86 federal wells in the Badger Hills area east of Decker, MT. Powder River Gas has proposed to drill wells for testing only and will be treating the produced water. We don't anticipate production because there is no transportation infrastructure for the gas. The MCFO staff has been working on lawsuits filed by opponents to the development. The lawsuit issues concern wildlife, water, West Nile Virus and cultural resources.
- The MCFO received two new applications from Fidelity Corporation. One for 26 federal wells within the Dry Creek area. Fidelity also provided an application on the Coal Creek Project. Fidelity has applied for 139 federal wells and up to 200 plus (with state and private land owners) in the Coal Creek area. Fidelity proposed a process called "managed irrigation". More information will be forthcoming.
- The pilot effort continues with the Hanging Women Creek working group. Meetings with interested and involved parties have been productive and progress is being made. RAC member Jack Bailey is part of the group and has been closely involved in the project.
- The MCFO will be looking for additional public opinion concerning the upcoming Resource Management Plan formulation.
- MCFO forester has started moving 1,300 acres for timber salvage. This is the first major timber sale for the MCFO. The timber salvage operations are due to fires last summer. The Missouri Breaks fire timber has been looked at for possible sale.
- MCFO range management staff has also issued approximately 60 miles of fencing supplies to ranchers that burned out last year under the Missouri Break Complex fires. Vegetation will be monitored in the burned area throughout the growing season and evaluated accordingly.

- Just a little reminder that the Public Lands Day is coming up. It will be held in Glendive, on May 22, 2004. The MCFO is encouraging everybody to join in and have a fun day cleaning up America.

### **Phoenix RAC Chairperson meeting discussion**

The RAC identified questions and concerns regarding the upcoming meeting in Phoenix.

Topics/issues discussed for presentation at the RAC Chair Meeting:

1. Address the issues on the grazing leases.
2. SWL and Why?
3. Grazing EIS
  - a. Comments
4. Energy Development
5. Access
  - a. Part of recent active program
  - b. Active development/Indian Development
6. Sage Grouse
  - a. West Nile
  - b. Listing studies
7. Tim Murphy/RAC Involvement
  - a. Community Communication
  - b. Community Involvement
  - c. Ground Rules
8. Wild Horse & Burro
  - a. New Policies
9. RAC Selection Process
10. How federal, state, etc. work together for the law enforcement.
11. Questions to Director
 

Cultural/Historic sites protection and ACEC's

  - a. Budget
  - b. Enforcement

### **Weatherman Draw/ Powder River Depot Field Trip: (Kallevig)**

The Weatherman Draw ACEC is a 15,000 acre area south of Bridger. Out of the 15,000 acres, 2,400 have been inventoried and 31 new archeological sites have been discovered. Weatherman Draw is now listed as a National Register District which gives the area added protection under the law.

Weatherman Draw past issues have included:

- Clayton McCracken (Sierra Club) has presented issues to the BLM and RAC to encourage protection of the Weatherman Draw area.
- Continued funding for cultural analysis.
- Illegal activity in the Weatherman Draw area.

Will Hubbell, Becky Kallevig and Doug Melton have been developing maps dealing with issues at the Powder River Depot.

Issue items:

- Cultural resource data collection.
- Land owners and subject “on site” assessment.
- Registering this site as a federally recognized historical site.
- Public access. (RAC is supportive of this concept.)

### **Billings Shooting Area Subcommittee Report :(Lubbers, Gibson)**

The Billings Shooting Area subcommittee is in the process of developing a brochure that will feature maps/keys for designated activities with explanatory directions and regulations on enforcement for Yellowstone County.

Supporting organizations will have their logos printed at the bottom of the brochure. Copies of the Brochure are slated to be released in June 15, 2004 (draft) and the final copy will be completed Sept. 1 --before hunting season. The subcommittee will release a copy of the brochure to all RAC members for suggestions.

### **Public Access Subcommittee: (Gibson)**

Temporarily closed roads were identified/found and researched in Yellowstone County. The Yellowstone county commissioners warranted that the closure was unnecessary and these roads should be open for public travel. The subcommittee is asking the RAC to identify other areas to be addressed for access opportunities. Legally abandoned roads and the propriety of such were discussed. A subcommittee meeting is planned for June 22, to discuss these issues in Miles City with David Squires. Other case examples were also discussed regarding easements, as well as other access examples.

### **Energy Subcommittee Formed:**

A new subcommittee was formed to address various energy related issues i.e.: alternative sources, tribal issues, transmission issues and APD processing. Group members are: Neta Old Elk, Chuck Hauptman, Mack Cole, Robert Lubbers and Howard Boggess.

### **Resource Management Plan Subcommittee:**

A new subcommittee was proposed to address various issues regarding the formulation of an updated MCFO RMP. Printed material was distributed to the RAC as a take-home

project for discussion at the next RAC meeting. Membership would include the entire RAC and will be a topic for further discussion.

### **Meeting Evaluation/Wrap-up/Agenda**

The next meeting has been set for July 26 (evening social) & 27 (meeting), 2004 at Miles City, MT.

### **Next Meeting Agenda Issues:**

Possible agenda items may include: MCFO RMP, Subcommittee reports, signing, Law Enforcement and other topics yet to be identified.

The RAC members took turns giving comments as part of an “After Action Review” about the meeting(s). Mark Jacobsen will compile these comments and use them as a guide for future meetings.