

**Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council Meeting
November 2, 2000, 9 a.m.
Bureau of Land Management Conference Room
Spokane, WA**

Members Present:

Laura Smith
Dave Billingsley
Linda North-Spaulding
Mike Peterson
Andrew Berg
Harold Mathews
Richard Old
Maurice Williamson
Donald Walter
Linda Harder
Mark Amara
JoAnna Meninick

Members Absent:

Doug Pineo
Fred Ebel
Bill Graedel

Designated Public Official:

Joseph K. Buesing

Guests:

George Buckingham, USFS, Colville
Kelly Courtright, BLM
Todd Thompson, BLM
Kathy Helm, BLM
Al Gardner, BLM
Scott Boyd, BLM
Rich Hubbard, BLM
Bob Trioano, BLM
Kevin Devitt, BLM
Jake Jakobosky, BLM
Jim Fisher, BLM
George Brown, BLM
David Hughes, BLM

Recorder: Candy Ford

Mr. Buesing opened the meeting by introducing two (2) of the new members, Linda Harder and Linda North-Spaulding.

Mr. Buesing identified expiring term members for 2001. Mr. Buesing stated that it was very difficult to get a quorum together for meeting mid-November through February due to the holidays and weather.

Linda North-Spaulding and Linda Harder both gave a brief biographical sketch. Linda North-Spaulding has a large ranch in Outlook, WA; she promotes education for off-road enthusiast; chairs state game advisory council; for fun she says she just works. Linda Harder told the council that she worked for Soil Conservation Service in Washington for about 10 years and married into the Harder family. She represents recreational interests and the Back Country Horsemen.

Round of introductions of all members followed. Mr. Buesing introduced Wenatchee Field Office Manager Jim Fisher and Acting Border Field Office Manager Kevin Devitt .

Mr. Buesing then reviewed the meeting schedule with the group. They will review the District's accomplishments for FY2000 and plans for FY2001; set up tentative dates for meetings in the coming fiscal year and discuss topics/issues that they would like to be involved in with the District. ICBEMP has always been on the agenda, but is not today. There is nothing new to report on ICBEMP; it is still on schedule. The members should receive copies of the Final Environmental Impact Statement when it is published in December.

Mr. Buesing introduced George Buckingham from the Colville National Forest. Mr. Buckingham will be discussing

the National Fire Action Plan Program and Land Adjustment Plan on the forest and future agenda topics. Nora Rasure was recently named as Forest Supervisor for the Colville National Forest. She was not available to attend today's meeting. Sherry Shweenky has been named as the new District Ranger for the Colville-Kettle Falls Ranger District. Mr. Buesing explained BLM's cooperative situation with the Forest Service (F.S.) and discussed the recent co-location of two (2) F.S. employees in the BLM Spokane District Office.

With loss of Loren Moos, the group lost its Chairperson. Mr. Buesing advised the group that they may want to elect a person to Chair upcoming meetings today, since the group lost its Chairperson with the loss of Loren Moos. No nominations were entered on the floor for chair at this point; Mr. Buesing facilitate the group until a Chair is selected later in the meeting.

Mr. Buesing discussed the BLM's Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2001. The budget for noxious weeds increased by \$1½ million dollars this year. Idaho received a \$750,000 increase in their budget for weeds. Nationally, there will be a \$4 million dollar increase in the Wild Horse and Burro Program; these funds will mostly be used for roundup expenses. Public Land Treasures received an allocation of \$8 million dollars; however, none of the money is to go to National Monuments. Mr. Buesing advised that very little money was budgeted for the realty process. The big story is that BLM public lands have to be managed pursuant to regulations. BLM planning documents do not automatically expire. The Spokane District last amended theirs in 1992. The Spokane Resource Management Plan covers everything east of the Cascades. Mr. Buesing stated that he did not know what the distribution will be for planning funds, but he anticipates \$10 million to possibly \$19

million Bureau-wide. BLM received \$2 million dollars from the Land & Water account for shrub steppe land acquisition.

Mr. Buesing advised that the Border Field Office Manager position will soon be advertised. He discussed the hiring process for filling a position at this level. He told the group that Kevin Devitt has been an outstanding acting Field Office Manager.

Mr. Buesing asked the group if there were any corrections to last meeting minutes; they follow :

Add Mark Amara and Harold Mathews to the last meeting. They were in attendance.

The minutes were adopted with the above corrections.

The group took a break at 10 a.m. A group photo was taken of all the members present.

A power point presentation followed:

Fire Presentation

Scott Boyd, Fire Management Officer
The Spokane District had 14 fires in FY2000 that burned 3,970 acres of BLM administered lands. The Cheyne Road Fire (461 acres) and Rocky Hull Fire (985 acres) were the largest fires this year. The district mechanically treated 90 acres and prescribed burned only 11 acres of a planned 790 acres of prescribed fires due to a Bureau-wide moratorium on prescribed burns after the Los Alamos fire occurred.

Forestry

Al Gardner, District Forester
The District conducted forestry/ecological survey of 3000 acres in the south Huckleberries. The District tested a new machine used as a substitute for fire on 27 acres of dense shrubs & weeds in the southern Huckleberries and will be planting

this area in pine trees. This new machine reduces brush and weeds to mulch with much less sprouting resulting than with standard fire treatment. Wenatchee Field Office will be having 300 acres treated with this machine. The machine creates a mat of material which should decompose. It reduces ground disturbance and costs a maximum of \$700/acre. The district pre-commercial thinned 60 acres in Black Canyon. Timber sale planning work was completed on Hunter Creek and Lane Mountain.

Wildlife

Todd Thompson, District Wildlife Biologist
The district is looking at regional, landscape scale concepts; it is operating in a matrix of private land. Looking at a composite view with a number of cooperators; the district completed 18 cooperative projects in FY2000. Discussed cooperative efforts and benefits to terrestrial and aquatic habitats. Broad-scale and mid-scale view; long term projects along Rock Creek. The Cheney High School honors class (30 students and 2 teachers) helped to monitor effectiveness of treatments. Presently searching for and establishing baseline data on the Northern Leopard Frog, a state endangered species. Looking at shrub-steppe conditions using landsat images and aerial photography; vegetation classification system and Imagine Spatial Analysis; output will be GIS Vegetative Cover of Shrub-Steppe Habitat. Endangered species were the focus in FY2000. Washington was the first state to list the Sage Grouse as threatened. The Burrowing Owl is listed as state sensitive and species of concern; this bird is distributed over wide range of habitats. Work is being done on Bat conservation - there is a need to obtain data about how they fit into the ecosystem. The district Botanist Guide - Field Guide to Washington Rare Plants - improves each year and is funded again for FY2001. Silene is a proposed

listed species.

Cultural Resources

Rich Bailey, District Archaeologist
McGloughlin Canyon was recently acquired. Caribou Trail- a mining trail-is a part of this acquisition; it was a part of the Hudson Bay Co. route. Cultural Resources has had a number of field schools and public outreach programs this year. They also inventoried approximately 3,000 acres, identified 38 cultural sites; monitored 66 cultural sites and completed evaluations for 4 cultural properties.

Cultural Resources counseled 9 tribes; participated in Root day in the spring with tribal members - including the Healing Lodge Group which were given the opportunity to dig first roots.

Recreation

Kevin Devitt, Acting Border Field Office Manager
The Border Resource Area completed three (3) major recreation projects this year in cooperation with outside sources (City of Odessa and others): installed a wildlife viewing blind at Smick Meadows, built a trail head outside the town of Odessa and installed a boat launch at upper Twin Lakes.

Mining

Kelly Courtright, Mining Engineer and George Brown, District Geologist
Ten (10) leaseable mining operations in Washington. Midnite & Sherwood Uranium (Spokane Tribal lands) mines are in the process of being reclaimed at this time. Sand and gravel operations in Douglas County and Goose Butte Community Pits . Two (2) proposed underground Natural Gas storage facilities by Columbia River in south Washington. Crown Jewel and Lame Foot Mines in Steven's County and Pend Oreille Mine in Pend Oreille County. Developing cooperative effort with the state on

abandoned mines; perhaps 200 abandoned mines exist on public lands and 700-800 in close proximity to public lands. The Washington Office is looking at most severe sites for remediation. Physical and environmental hazards are the primary evaluation tools for severity at this time. About nine (9) plan-level sites and about 200 notice-level sites exist in the District. BLM works with the Office of the Inspector General and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) active mine sites. About 18 cases were closed as adequately reclaimed this year. Numerous unauthorized occupancies exist on the District. A copy of the 3009 regulations is available to all members.

Hazardous Materials

Jake Jakobosky, District Environmental Protection Specialist (HazMat)
Jake discussed funding for the Cleveland Mine Site and Kaaba Texas Mine Site. The Kaaba Texas Mine site has mixed ownership and is an orphan site due to the private owners not having the funds for reclamation; physical hazards exist. BLM has entered into an interagency agreement with EPA to reclaim the site. Tailings have been moved to a repository out of the flood plain. Native species were planted in the reclamation process. The d contamination abatement design was discussed. The Cleveland site was very toxic with many heavy metals. The stream in that area was diverted around tailings to eliminate the contamination of surface water.

Land Acquisitions

Kevin Devitt, Acting Border Field Office Manager and Jim Fisher, Wenatchee Field Office Manager
Lopez Island - part of beach, cliffs, freshwater wetlands and forest acquired.
Wall Lake - acquired small portion of Harder property which allows public access to Wall Lake and eliminates a cumbersome

ownership pattern. The Department of Fish and Wildlife stocked Wall Lake with 3000 Lake Lenore trout.

Range & Weed Program

Rich Hubbard, Natural Resource Specialist and Bob Troiano, Natural Resource Specialist
Allotment Management Plans - site specific grazing plans; numerous plans have been completed this year. Formal Rangeland Health evaluations have been completed on these same allotments. Grazing leases were put through an inter-disciplinary review this year before renewal. Rangeland health assessments were conducted. BLM worked with county weed boards to coordinate treatment areas. Treated 3,100 acres with biological and herbicide treatments; mechanical control; manual control. Inventoried approx. 36,000 acres for weeds. Developed water collection troughs for cattle to help protect spring and stream beds.

Lunch break was called at 11:30.

Meeting was called to order at 12:45

There will be a satellite broadcast November 30th, 2000, at 9 or 9:30 a.m. with the Secretary. Topics will include off-road issues, among others. Mr. Buesing will let all members know of the exact time. Video tapes will be made available to all members who are unable to attend.

Mr. Buesing requested that members think about what they would like to be involved with in FY2001 District Program Plans.

Fire:

The district treated 2,276 acres with prescribed fires and mechanical means. Prescribed fires were completed for weed control and re-establishment of forage materials.

Cultural:

Continued evaluations and stabilization of facilities will continue in FY2001. Additional field schools will be held in the Saddle Mountains and on Rock Creek Management Area/Escure Ranch Property. Cultural Resources will be looking at number of prehistoric and historic structures and sites. They will also be working with tribes to develop a Memorandum of Understanding.

Forestry:

Forestry ecology system Forestry Health Fund. Some \$14 million available. Forest Health Initiative.

Wildlife:

Continuing initiatives from FY2000; Mid-level, mid-scale eastern Washington watershed assessment - will be sharing data with other groups; Lake and Packer Creek Wetland Restoration Project; Regional conservation strategy for the Greater Sage Grouse; Burrowing Owl ecology study; Canada Lynx biological opinion - looking at land use plans; restoring the hydrology to get species back into the drainages.

Land Exchanges

DNR/BLM Exchange - DNR acquiring lands in Benton & Coulee City area. Working on mitigation and about ready to make exchange. Central Washington exchange - 71 parcels to be consolidated for 5 different parcels in Moses Coulee and Salmon Creek area; awaiting appraisal approval from Washington Office Exchange Team. Upper Crab Creek LWCF exchange - these properties will have 1st priority with Land and Water Exchange Funds for acquisition; fits in with the Twin Lakes area, Fishtrap area and Rock Creek area. BLM is working with the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy to appraise. Part of Land and Water conservation fund project for acquisition. Yakima Canyon project area

will have no activity this year.

Mining

Complete review of grandfathered patent applications; implement new surface management regulations; review and inspect notices and plans of operations; ensure abandoned mine project areas are reclaimed; work to resolve unauthorized occupancies; work with Department of Natural Resources and Ecology to develop on-going plans for abandoned mine closures.

Range

Allotment management plans will continue to be written for Bailey, Rocky Ford, Goose Butte, Billingsley. Range Health assessments on all of these allotments as well. Also anticipating some work up near the Canadian border. Range improvement projects are planned for several counties. Weed management program will continue. Range lease renewal percentage is near 100 percent renewal rate.

Round robin of issues the Council would like to address followed:

Mike Petersen stated he was interested in looking at restoration projects; use of Fire Planning monies; he believes that restoration was not addressed comprehensively in the previous planning documents (the 92 Amendment did mention restoration).

Dave Billingsley stated that the re-evaluation philosophy of evaluation for preservation and restoration seems to have forgotten production; weed issue is critical; Sage Grouse is a real significant issue. He would like to see RAC spend more time on the philosophy of what the agency (BLM) wants to do. He also would like to see alternate office meeting one month with a field trip next month.

Richard Old stated that he would like to see channeled scablands acquisition continue;

many of the privately held channeled scablands areas are rich with natural resources. He would also like to see progress on the ground.

Maurice Williamson is interested in the forest lands of north eastern Washington. He recommended that BLM and the F.S. meet with the Confederated Tribes in north eastern Washington.

Laura Smith recommended a Rock Creek field trip.

JoAnna Meninick advised that Sage Grouse have been located on the firing range; officials at the firing range want to move them off onto habitat on the reservation. She stated that the Tribes remain isolated and that the Tribes are interested in range for production and recreation. She would rather be out on the ground meeting than meeting in the office. She would like to see the RAC meet with the Tribes to discuss what is on the Tribe's minds. The Tribes are very interested in the environment and wildlife. She stated that the Tribes want economic benefit, too. ICBEMP involvement. She also stated that she would like information regarding the Wild Horse & Burro Program. Works w/NEPA.

Mark Amara is interested in threatened and endangered plant species and how they are being effected. especially with regards to traditional use by Native Americans or for historical uses; they have not been addressed at this level very well. He would also like to see more field trips.

Potential Dates for meetings:

Nov 30 - Satellite with the Secretary
January 25th, 2001 - ICBEMP, Budget,
Other Funding Items; Clarification of Issues
February 22nd, 2001
March 22, 2001
April 26, 2001 - Field Trip to Upper Falls of

Rock Creek
May 24, 2001 - Sage Grouse
June 21, 2001 - NE WA Timber Area;
Colville Tribe Forest Plan
July 26, 2001
August 23, 2001-
September 27, 2001
October 25, 2001
The recorder will keep a running log of conflicts on meeting dates from members and the members will let Candy know if they have conflicts.

Election of a chair:
Harold Mathews was nominated & Linda North-Spaulding seconded the nomination.

Mike Petersen suggested that whoever is Chair needs to push members and Designated Federal Representative to hold meetings.

Laura Smith agreed with Mike Petersen; she added that she would like to see Council's time spent productively.

Dave Billingsley suggested Harold Mathews be named acting chair until the next official meeting when a chair will be elected. He suggested that Mike Schroder, an expert on Sage Grouse, be recruited to meet with the RAC and suggest an area for a field trip. Rich Old stated that he thinks the Council should categorically look at weeds on any field trip.

George Buckingham, Colville National Forest, stated that he would like to hear about prescribed fire regarding the National Fire Action Plan. Mr. Buckingham would like the Council to consider building an agenda of items that the council would like to address, so that he can get specialists together to provide expert information to the group.

Mr. Buckingham provided the group with the handout, "Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment." He stated that there will be a significant amount of monies available for training, new hiring, fire-fighting resources, et cetera, due to the 100's of 1000's of acres burned this last summer. Many of the burned areas have already been mapped. A high degree of concern has been expressed publicly with cost and the amount of work to be done in areas, especially with regard to damage to stream channels. A great deal of money is anticipated for hazardous fuel reduction, especially for urban-interface areas and restoration treatments that are oriented to reduce fuel-driven fires. The F.S. is anticipating providing assistance to the community in the form of training and equipment; many community firefighters are not trained or equipped to handle wildland fires. The F.S. plans to work directly with communities to do pre-fire suppression planning. A lot of the historic fires on the Colville National Forest are fuel-driven fires. He stated that accountability systems need to be developed to ensure cooperative efforts. Currently, \$1.1 billion is budgeted for the national fire plan. The F.S. does not actually have their portion of the \$1.1 billion, nor do they have the who, what and wherefores of how the money will be spent. They will not know until mid-January how much the Colville National Forest will be receiving. There were 4,000 acres of prescribed fires on the Colville National Forest this past year at a cost of about \$55 an acre. Mr. Buckingham encouraged the RAC to make recommendations regarding the National Fire Action Plan in two (2) categories: restoration fire which is aggressive and usually follows some type of thinning activity; and maintenance fire, which is used to maintain an area to a sustainable condition.

He also handed out a briefing sheet on the Forest Service Land Adjustment Plan. It is only a paper plan; the actual work comes with exchange or acquisition proposals. There is a tremendous opportunity to improve land management through acquisition and exchange. At present, 38,000 acres have been identified for potential acquisition and 18,200 acres have been identified for possible disposal.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. by acting chair Mathews after a motion was made and seconded by group members.