

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43

**FINAL PROTOCOLS FOR
THE NORTHWEST COLORADO STEWARDSHIP**

BACKGROUND

The region of Northwest Colorado is composed of private, federal, state, and county lands, and encompasses several towns and communities. Moffat County, Routt County, and Rio Blanco County lie in the northwest corner of the state. The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Little Snake Field Office oversees a significant portion of Northwest Colorado, including lands that are highly valued by the public for their physical and cultural beauty in the form of petroglyphs, sculpted canyons, and open space as well as the economic benefit resulting from ranching, energy development, and recreation. Other federal agencies with major interests and responsibilities in the region include the U.S. National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. In addition, the State of Colorado owns significant holdings in the region.

Because these public lands are of such great concern to the diverse communities in Moffat, Routt, and Rio Blanco Counties, as well as the communities of interest across the State of Colorado and beyond, there has been extensive public interest in the use and management of these lands. For many years this interest has manifested itself through community discussions, lawsuits, legislative requests, and a BLM wilderness reinventory of Vermillion Basin.

In 2002, the Moffat County Commission and Land Use Board proposed an alternative approach to public lands management in the region, and a series of contentious debates between different interests ensued. Eventually, a wide variety of community members, companies, and organizations accepted the invitation to cooperatively and proactively address land management issues in the region. In response, the Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS) was formed in March of 2003. Through NWCOS, diverse interests are empowered to learn together about public land management and make recommendations to BLM and other agencies on land management through a diversity of approaches.

As of May 2004, NWCOS has undertaken many efforts including:

- Building capacity by organizing or participating in several workshops on fire management, community partnerships, and place-based NEPA;
- Identifying shared priorities and a structure for going forward; and
- Designing the details for a habitat restoration program.

In March of 2004, NWCOS participants agreed to formalize their organization and future plans. A first step in this process is to develop formal Protocols for the group. The remainder of this document sets forth these Protocols, which were agreed to by full consensus on August 18, 2004.

44 **NWCOS MISSION**

45
46 By seeking early, diverse, and collaborative input, NWCOS seeks to improve public lands
47 decision-making by promoting commonly held values and principles.

48
49 **NWCOS GOALS AND PRINCIPLES**

50
51 NWCOS exists to accomplish the following goals:

- 52
- 53 • Where appropriate, cultivate partnerships among citizens, interest groups, companies, and
54 government agencies in order to encourage sound stewardship.
 - 55 • Provide recommendations that:
 - 56 ♦ Comply with existing laws;
 - 57 ♦ Protect private property, water, and mineral rights; and
 - 58 ♦ Are based on current science including adaptive management, monitoring, and
59 evaluation techniques.
 - 60 • Actively encourage a balanced and diverse membership of NWCOS to ensure
61 comprehensive input.
- 62

63 NWCOS supports the following principles:

- 64
- 65 • Encourage innovation.
 - 66 • Function with openness and transparency.
 - 67 • Recognize that conservation and economic well-being in communities are
68 interdependent.
 - 69 • Encourage a larger public role in public lands decision-making by empowering
70 communities of both place and interest to participate in the planning, participate in the
71 decision-making process, and support implementation.
- 72

73 **MEMBERSHIP**

- 74
- 75 • NWCOS is open to the public and there is no appointed or formal membership.
 - 76 • Levels of involvement will be determined by the individual and may consist of full
77 participation in meetings or the receipt of quarterly updates.
 - 78 • NWCOS members can choose to participate as individuals or as formal members of their
79 organizations or agencies.
- 80

81 **MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 82
- 83 • Abide by these established Protocols and allow the facilitator to enforce them.
 - 84 • Actively participate in NWCOS discussions and decisions and speak up if opposed to a
85 NWCOS proposal.
 - 86 • Provide an explanation for all objections and propose an alternative solution.
 - 87 • Avoid destructive language and personal attacks.
 - 88 • Assume responsibility for coming up to speed on the issues, particularly if a new member
89 or attend sporadically.

- 90 • Proactively work to keep constituents, colleagues, and managers informed about the work
91 of NWCOS. NWCOS members have a responsibility to work proactively within their
92 respective communities and organizations to support the work and recommendations of
93 NWCOS.
- 94 • Avoid surprises. To the extent possible, avoid surprising other NWCOS members with
95 news regarding major policy decisions, lawsuits, media releases, etc.
- 96 • Explicitly inform other NWCOS participants of any conflicts of interest that are not
97 obvious.

98
99 **NEW MEMBERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES**

100
101 NWCOS welcomes and encourages new members to participate. The group will proactively
102 seek to involve new interests.

- 103
104 • New members will be provided with a copy of these Protocols and/or a summary version.
- 105 • New members who desire to participate in NWCOS will be asked to sign a short
106 document stating their support of the cooperative spirit of NWCOS and their willingness
107 to abide by the Protocols.
- 108 • Individuals not wishing to support the Protocols are welcome to observe, but not disrupt,
109 NWCOS meetings. Opportunity for public comment from these individuals will be
110 provided at regular intervals.
- 111 • New members may request assistance in being brought up-to-date on topics through a
112 variety of channels (the Communication and Participation Subcommittee, the Planning
113 Committee, or the facilitator).
- 114 • New members will be asked to respect the time and efforts of NWCOS work to date and
115 to productively build on this work.

116
117 **AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES**

118
119 NWCOS proposes to provide input to a variety of land management agencies in Northwest
120 Colorado. Each agency seeking input from NWCOS in developing land management decisions
121 will provide the group with the responsibilities of the agency, which includes how the agency
122 will participate in the consensus process and how the agency will consider NWCOS input.

123
124 The following are BLM responsibilities:

125
126 The BLM will:

- 127 • Work closely with NWCOS to assist them in achieving their goals but abstain from
128 participating in the consensus process when seeking advice;
- 129 • Provide information and resources to NWCOS as reasonable;
- 130 • Immediately inform NWCOS of any options that NWCOS is considering that conflict
131 with federal statutes or BLM policy;
- 132 • Not use NWCOS as BLM's sole source of public input; and
- 133 • Listen carefully to NWCOS input, particularly when a consensus represents the full
134 diversity of concerns on an issue, and respond formally or informally to the group as to
135 what BLM plans to do with this advice.

136 Public members of NWCOS recognize that agencies often have special roles in the policy
137 development process of other agencies, which will happen in addition to NWCOS participation.
138 For example, some agencies may serve as “cooperating agencies” in the development of a
139 Resource Management Plan. NWCOS encourages all such agencies to participate actively in the
140 consensus process. At a minimum, however, all agencies participating in NWCOS agree to
141 provide consistent input to NWCOS and these other avenues of input, or to disclose why this is
142 not possible.

143

144 **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

145

146 • The Planning Committee will assist NWCOS with organizational and planning needs.

147

148 • If NWCOS does not have a facilitator, the Planning Committee shall elect a Chair to
149 fulfill the responsibilities given to the facilitator in these Protocols.

150

151 • The Planning Committee will consist of three NWCOS members:

152

153

154

155

156 • The facilitator or Chair of the Planning Committee will solicit nominations and consult
157 with NWCOS to develop and propose a slate of Planning Committee members. This
158 slate will be approved or denied by NWCOS. These three positions will be filled on a
159 rotating basis with terms lasting 9 months, and NWCOS members cannot serve
160 consecutive terms.

161

162 • Three individuals may participate on the Planning Committee in an ex-officio capacity.
163 They include:

164

165

166

167

168

169

170 • The Planning Committee will make decisions by consensus and all decisions of the
171 Planning Committee are subject to ratification by NWCOS.

172

173 • Responsibilities of the Planning Committee include:

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

- ♦ Reviewing the agenda and providing advice to the facilitator in preparing for NWCOS meetings. A draft agenda will be circulated to all NWCOS participants in advance of the meeting. NWCOS members may choose to provide feedback to the facilitator, a Planning Committee member, or at the beginning of the meeting.
- ♦ Ensuring that all NWCOS materials are sufficiently available to the public and that all NWCOS meetings are sufficiently publicly noticed in the media, at a minimum.

- ◆ Serving as an immediate sounding board when there is a pressing issue that does not allow sufficient time for organizing a full NWCOS meeting. In these circumstances, the facilitator or Chair of the Planning Committee must provide email notice to all NWCOS participants at the same time the Planning Committee is notified. Any NWCOS member may observe such meetings. The Planning Committee should report promptly to the full group regarding its activities and input.

SUBCOMMITTEES

- NWCOS may create subcommittees to evaluate specific issues and make recommendations for action to the full NWCOS membership.
- NWCOS subcommittees cannot make decisions without deferring to NWCOS as a whole. Subcommittees will present their recommendations for full approval during NWCOS meetings, using the decision-making process outlined below.

DECISION-MAKING

NWCOS Authority

- The creation of NWCOS does not reduce or alter the legal decision-making authority of any agencies or organizations participating in this effort. NWCOS is an advisory group that provides input but is not the decision-maker.
- Consensus recommendations from such diverse participants should be carefully considered by decision-makers. BLM and the other participating agencies and organizations appreciate both the value of NWCOS consensus recommendations on difficult issues and the implications of ignoring such advice at the risk of lawsuits and political solutions.
- As NWCOS chooses to use a facilitator, NWCOS desires that the facilitator accurately reflect all NWCOS work products to the agencies and the public.

Consensus Decision-Making

- The intent of NWCOS is to make all substantive decisions by consensus. The group will strongly aspire to achieve this goal.
- Government agencies soliciting advice may choose not to be a part of the consensus, but are encouraged to participate fully in the discussions.
- All other agency participants are encouraged to participate in the consensus decision-making process, to the extent appropriate. These representatives may choose to participate as individuals or as formal representatives of their agencies. Other NWCOS participants should assume they are participating as individuals unless otherwise stated.
- For the purposes of NWCOS decision-making, all of the following definitions will be considered “consensus”:
 - ◆ There is unanimous agreement among all participants present.
 - ◆ All NWCOS members present are willing to “live with” the proposal.

- 225 ♦ One or more members present may register dissent, but do not wish to block
226 NWCOS from action or agreement that would otherwise be possible except
227 for their dissent.
- 228 • Participants that are not able to attend a meeting may provide input to the facilitator
229 or the Planning Committee in advance of the meeting. NWCOS will do its best to
230 accommodate these concerns at the meeting, but may or may not choose to delay final
231 consensus until all concerned participants can attend.

FAILURE TO REACH CONSENSUS

232

233

234

235 In the rare instance that NWCOS cannot achieve consensus on an issue, NWCOS will write up a
236 detailed summary of points of agreement and disagreement instead. Given the transparent nature
237 of the NWCOS process, such a summary would include which parties or interests agreed or
238 disagreed. Dissenters will be asked to participate in the development of this summary.

239

240 NWCOS participants should take into consideration the following factors before choosing this
241 path:

- 242
- 243 • Would consensus advice have a greater impact than individual advice?
 - 244 • Does the majority represent a full diversity of all the various interests?
 - 245 • How hard did the group work to come to consensus?
 - 246 • How hard did the dissenting individual(s) work to form a consensus?
 - 247 • Is the recipient of the advice aware of the situation surrounding the failure to reach
248 consensus and thus able to appreciate the nuances of a report listing areas of agreement
249 and disagreement?
 - 250 • How soon does the advice need to be provided in order to be timely?

INTERACTING WITH THE MEDIA

- 251
- 252 • NWCOS members are free to speak about their own views and the views of their
253 organizations.
 - 254 • NWCOS members will not attribute statements to others or attempt to speak for
255 NWCOS.
 - 256 • NWCOS may issue consensus press releases.
 - 257 • A Planning Committee meeting or conference call may occur to respond to media
258 requests for an overview of NWCOS activities.

NWCOS DOCUMENTATION

- 259
- 260 • All NWCOS documents and works-in-progress will be considered public documents and
261 readily available to the public. Ideally, this will include posting documents on a public
262 web site and/or making copies available at the public library.
 - 263 • All NWCOS documents will be marked as draft, final consensus document, or final
264 summary of NWCOS views.
 - 265 • NWCOS members shall not characterize draft NWCOS documents as final or use them in
266 any other effort until finalized by NWCOS.
- 267
- 268
- 269
- 270

- 271 • All NWCOS documents should indicate past changes in red-line/strike-out until finalized,
272 unless a clean copy is specifically requested by the group.
- 273 • The facilitator shall serve as the neutral recorder for the group. To the extent no facilitator
274 exists, the Planning Committee shall identify an individual to serve in this role.
- 275 • All NWCOS meetings should result in draft meeting summaries that will include, at a
276 minimum:
- 277 ♦ A list of action items;
 - 278 ♦ A description of any group consensus; and
 - 279 ♦ A description of where the group failed to reach consensus.
- 280 • Two weeks will be provided for NWCOS members to comment on draft meeting
281 summaries. To the extent no comments are received, the draft shall be considered final.
282 If comments are received, a final version will be sent out to all NWCOS members.
- 283

284 **AMENDING THESE PROTOCOLS**

285

286 Amendment of these Protocols requires full consensus of currently participating NWCOS
287 members. Notification shall be provided to the full NWCOS mailing list before an amendment is
288 accepted.

**Northwest Colorado Stewardship
Protocols Signatories List**

The following individuals agree to abide by the Northwest Colorado Stewardship Protocols. Organizations are listed to show the diversity of interests that participated in this process and are not intended to convey that entire organizations or agencies formally endorse this document.

Stephen R. Andrew
Moffat County Farm Bureau

Steve Bonowski
Colorado Mountain Club

Vanessa Cameron
Julander Energy

Terry Carwile
Citizen

Jeremy Casterson
Little Snake Field Office
Bureau of Land Management

Jeff Comstock
Moffat County

T. Wright Dickinson
Vermillion Ranch Limited Partnership

Ray DuBois
Resident Land Owner
Trapper Mining Inc.

Stephen Flaherty
Western Gas Resources

Mike Frazier
Citizen

Dean Gent
Moffat County Land Use Board

Tom Gray
Citizen

Kathy Hall
Northwest Resource Advisory Council
Colorado Oil and Gas Association

Suzanne Halvorson
Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge

Rick Hammel
Independent Wildlife Advocate

Les Hampton
Moffat County Commissioner
District 1

Patrick Heffernan
Red Lodge Clearinghouse

Steve Hinkemeyer
Moffat County Land Use Board
Trapper Mining Inc.

John Husband
Little Snake Field Office
Bureau of Land Management

Suzanne Jones
The Wilderness Society

Fred C. Julander
Julander Energy Company

Richard Levy
Trappers Lake Sierra Club

Wes McStay
Citizen

Reed Morris
Colorado Wilderness Network

Claire M. Moseley
Public Lands Advocacy

Ann Oliver
The Nature Conservancy

Sandy Orgoglioso
Moffat County Citizen

Brad Petch
Colorado Division of Wildlife

Marianna Raftopoulos
Moffat County Commissioner Chair
District 2

Beverly Rave, District Manager
Colorado State Land Board

Christi Ruppe
Western Colorado Congress

Luke Schafer
Colorado Wilderness Network

Bill Shearer
Buys and Associates, Inc.

JoAnne Smith
Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge

Darryl Steele
Moffat County Commissioner
District 3

Jean Stetson
Moffat County Land Use Board

Saed F. Tayyara
Citizen

Jane Yazzie
Moffat County Citizen