

I really feel I need to get something out to NWCOS participants regarding the many rumors, reactions to the Director's visit, future role of NWCOS, etc.

Folks, I'm committed to finding ways to make community-based partnership efforts in resource management work. It just makes sense to me that the more buy in and support from our communities that we can get, the better our resource management will be in terms of having better information, avoiding costly litigation, being able to actually implement our plans, leveraging our capability, common understanding amongst all of us interested in the public lands, and on and on.

Realize that we are forging ahead in largely uncharted territory here. We are being encouraged from the Department of Interior on down to engage more in community collaboration and explore some new ideas in adaptive management. At the same time, there are still all the legal and policy requirements in place that there always have been - we still have the same procedural steps to go through, the same levels of review to go through, etc. And the way to get through the requirements while incorporating the new approaches is not well mapped. Our challenge is to find a way through.

Regarding the value of community vision and input into our RMP process - I for one have no doubt about how valuable it is. If you can come to some common ground with a community vision for management of the public lands, even just on some topics, that vision is going to carry a lot of weight. Is it vulnerable to being modified by policy reviews, legal challenges, funding realities, etc.? Sure it is - that's a fact of life. But without community vision and input, I can guarantee that the community will not have buy in to the plan we produce. In other words, if you don't provide community input, it is guaranteed not to be considered. On the other hand, if the community can provide a broadly supported vision that is within our legal framework, then you've produced something that I can go to bat for.

I think NWCOS' efforts have been very valuable to date. We've learned a lot from you and you've learned a lot from each other. We'll continue to incorporate your community vision into our plan to the extent that we can as we learn more about it. I don't think there is anyone out there that doesn't realize that it is ultimately BLM's decision as to the RMP we select. But we certainly need to listen to the community as we make that decision.

Within the next month we'll need to wrap up our alternative formulation so we can get on with alternative analysis. I commend you all for the time and effort you have committed to the community collaboration and look forward to any additional input NWCOS may have on alternatives.

Thanks.

John