

**Northwest Colorado Stewardship
Vegetation and Habitat Subcommittee Meeting
April 19, 2005
Meeting Summary**

[Facilitator’s Note: A digital audio recording was made of this meeting. This recording can be obtained from Jeff Comstock at jcomstock@moffatcounty.net or (970) 826-3400.]

Action Items

Who	What
BLM	Provide directive on Adaptive Management to group.
Brad Petch	Provide information on the currency of wildlife data that is available during ongoing subcommittee discussions.
BLM	Include more habitats in alternatives—specifically, salt desert scrub and mountain scrub.
Jeff Comstock	Contact someone from the State Land Board about participation in subcommittee.
Kristi Parker Celico	Continue Luke Schafer’s efforts to get someone from wild horse sector involved in NWCOS/subcommittees.
Kristi Parker Celico	Contact someone from the off-highway vehicles sector about participation in subcommittee.
Kristi Parker Celico	Contact Suzanne Beauchaine about participation in subcommittee.
Jeremy Casterson	Contact someone from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about participation in subcommittee.
Brad Petch	Contact outfitters Tom and Sue Mikesell, as well as Mary Lynn James, about participating in subcommittee.
NWCOS/BLM	Get comments to Keystone on goals and alternatives by April 27. Comments and ideas received after this date will not be addressed in May versions of BLM documents, but will be addressed in June versions. [Facilitator’s Note: This deadline has been extended to April 29.]
NWCOS/BLM/Keystone	NWCOS members can ask BLM to prepare any maps they think the group will find helpful on an ongoing basis. BLM will prepare these maps, and Keystone will post them to the NWCOS website.
NWCOS	Send comments on this meeting summary to Heather Bergman by Friday, May 13 (hbergman@keystone.org ; 800-574-8157, x 5806). Comments received by this date will be incorporated into the final draft. If no comments are received, this draft will become final on May 16.

Attendance

Vanessa Cameron, Jeremy Casterson, Jeff Comstock, T. Wright Dickinson, Tom Gray, Steve Hinkemeyer, Suzanne Jones, Fred Julander (by phone), Reed Morris, Wes McStay, Andrea Minor, Tim Novotny, Ann Oliver, Brad Petch, Josh Pollock (by phone), Marianna Raftopoulos, Jane Yazzie, Kristi Parker Celico, and Heather Bergman.

Key Items from the Meeting Agenda (Each section is summarized below.)

1. Review of Where We Are in the RMP Process
2. Subcommittee Process Issues
3. Introduction to Maps
4. Quick Review of Goals and Objectives
5. BLM's Alternative Shell
6. Review of Goals and Objectives in Light of Discussion on Alternatives
7. Next Steps

Key Documents Discussed:

- o RMP shell dated April 8, 2005, available at <http://nwcoss.org/Resources/BLM%20Documents/BLM%20Draft%20Alternative%20Shell%204-8-05.pdf>.

1. Review of Where We Are in the RMP Process

The facilitator discussed several aspects of this issue, referring to tables, diagrams, and other information that she had prepared on chart paper. In order to prevent confusion, this has been prepared in a separate document. It contains information on the BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) process, the Goals and Alternative process, and the current NWCOS role in these processes. It also contains The Keystone Center's proposal for ways to improve communication between NWCOS, BLM, and Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH). This document is called "Introductory Information from April Subcommittee Meetings" and is available on the NWCOS website at <http://nwcoss.org/Subcommittees/Introductory%20info%20for%20April%20Subcom%20meeting%20s.pdf>. If you were not at the meeting or are confused about NWCOS's role in the RMP process, please refer to this document.

2. Subcommittee Process Issues

Make-up of Subcommittee

Regarding membership, the subcommittee observed that several key interests were missing from the table, and certain members agreed to contact representatives of those interests. For specific assignments, see Action Items above.

[Facilitator's Note: Two agenda items—"Overview and Goals of Subcommittee" and "Proposed Subcommittee Process"—had been addressed during the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee meeting that was held on March 10, 2005. The group agreed to accept the decisions on goals and process that had been made during the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee meeting. These decisions are reproduced below for the reader's convenience.]

Overview and Goals of Subcommittee

The subcommittee agreed with the following goals (which were listed in the meeting agenda):

- ♦ Develop goals and objectives for resource
- ♦ Develop alternatives for analysis, including where resource uses (and the subcommittees that deal with them) overlap
- ♦ Comment on how alternatives should be analyzed, if above and beyond BLM's process
- ♦ Comment on implementation issues that are critical to any alternatives (e.g., monitoring funds for any adaptive management options)
- ♦ Take periodic field trips to resource first-hand

Proposed Subcommittee Process

On the agenda for this meeting were three proposals regarding subcommittee procedures. These three proposals and the action the subcommittee took on them are:

- ♦ Subcommittees are not decision-makers. Subcommittees make recommendations to NWCOS, and NWCOS makes recommendations to BLM.
Action taken: The subcommittee agreed.
- ♦ Subcommittee membership will be open, but new members will be obligated to read past information and comply with NWCOS protocols.
Action taken: The subcommittee agreed.
- ♦ Subcommittees aim for consensus, though recommendations with at least 90% support will be carried to NWCOS along with the pros and cons of both the majority and minority positions.
Action taken: After some discussion, the subcommittee decided that setting a percentage minimum for agreement at this point in time was unnecessary. The subcommittee will aim for consensus and address the issue of what percentage agreement will be required on a case-by-case basis.

The subcommittee also agreed that minutes will reflect action items, decisions taken, and major themes of discussion, as well as particular areas of concerns or issues that arise.

3. Introduction to Maps

Jeremy Casterson discussed the data that BLM has available in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) computer program and that can be put into a map for the group to examine. These data include: vegetation types, winter range from some species, species occurrences, migration corridors, raptor locations, prairie dog towns, county roads, off-road vehicle designations, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Citizens' Wilderness Proposal (CWP) areas, coal leases, oil and gas leases, grazing allotments, etc. Some of this data is from BLM, and BLM can provide these datasets to anyone who is interested. Other data are from other agencies, and BLM is not authorized to share these datasets, but Jeremy can provide names and contact information of people who are authorized to share the data. Some of the datasets are more recent and more reliable than others. During ongoing NWCOS discussions, Brad Petch offered to comment on the relative currency and reliability of the wildlife data. Brad also pointed out that the Colorado Division of Wildlife data are available on the Internet at: www.ndis.nrel.colostate.edu.

Reed Morris and Suzanne Jones introduced maps that they have. These maps show CWP areas, and there are transparent maps of wildlife winter range and other species data that can be overlaid.

The group agreed that any maps that are of particular and ongoing interest can be posted to the NWCOS website. Participants who want such maps posted should contact Jeremy (or whomever has the data and the ability to make maps), Jeremy (or whoever else has the map) will send a digital copy of the map to Helen Littrell at Keystone at she will post it to the NWCOS website. Jeremy can be reached at (970) 826-5071 or jeremy_casterson@blm.gov. Helen can be reached at (800) 574-8157 x 5825, or hlittrell@keystone.org.

4. Quick Review of Goals and Objectives

The start of a list of overarching goals and objectives for the whole RMP was posted in the room. These goals were referred to during the group discussion and BLM anticipates including a similar type of list at the beginning of the RMP, as opposed to restating each of these attributes for each specific resource. [This is a partial list of these goals. The list is expected to grow as the subcommittee's work progresses.]

- multiple use
- rural lifestyle
- open space
- (NWCOS discussed how one key method of maintaining rural lifestyle and open space is to ensure that the ranching industry remains solvent. Others agreed that this is one way, but not the only possible approach.)
- adaptive management
- valid existing rights
- maintain quality wildlife, landscape level
- standards and guidelines

The group briefly discussed how some of the above are legal requirements and some are attributes that the community would like to see maintained. It may be appropriate for BLM/NWCOS to separate out the legal requirements from the attributes in the overarching goals section.

BLM has received comments on its goals and objectives from several NWCOS members, but the agency has not yet incorporated these into a new version of this document. Either BLM or Keystone will incorporate these comments and distribute a new version to NWCOS as soon as possible.

The group had a brief discussion about the specific sagebrush goals that BLM has listed in the alternative shell under the Vegetation section. BLM staff thought these goals were from another BLM sagebrush policy document and were mandatory, while some members of the subcommittee thought that might not be the case. BLM staff will look into this and clarify for the group.

One participant stated that BLM should add a goal that addresses the idea of managing for desired outcomes. Another participant suggested that BLM add to its overarching goals a statement about achieving goals while also supporting a viable livestock industry.

5. BLM’s Alternative Shell

The version of the BLM alternative shell discussed at this meeting is available at <http://nwcoss.org/Resources/BLM%20Documents/BLM%20Draft%20Alternative%20Shell%204-8-05.pdf>.

The group discussed BLM’s alternative shell for vegetation and habitat with some difficulty, due to the lack of specificity in this version of the shell. This difficulty was increased by the large number of resources that are included in the shell for vegetation and habitat (soil, water, vegetation overall, fish/wildlife habitat, special status species, wild horses, fire, grazing, and forest products). The group’s attempt to identify the goal posts is reflected in the table below.

Minimum Protection	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Maximum Protection
Aim to meet standards and guidelines in X% of land area	Aim to meet standards and guidelines in X% of land area and work to improve riparian (or other) areas	Aim to meet standards and guidelines in X% of land area and work to improve riparian (or other) areas even more	Aim to meet standards and guidelines in X% of land area and work to improve riparian (or other) areas even more

Note: The “X%” is drawn from BLM’s alternative shell. The agency has not yet determined a minimum, maximum, or target amount of land that should meet standards and guidelines.

Discussion of Additional BLM Funding for This RMP Revision

John Husband of BLM joined the meeting briefly to report on a discussion he had with someone from the BLM State Office about the possibility of the Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) receiving an additional \$1.4 million from the BLM National Office for this RMP revision. John said that he was asked whether the RMP could be completed sooner if the LSFO had these additional funds. He responded that extra money could probably result 1) in the RMP being completed a few months sooner, and 2) in sooner implementation due to fewer lawsuits. He also said that the National Office had attached some strings to the money. Specifically, the plan could become “time sensitive,” which usually means lots of top-down influence and control from Washington. John reported saying that he would not want to sacrifice the current arrangement in which the LSFO is leading the RMP revision process with NWCOS input in a place-based, bottom-up effort, and would prefer to carry on without additional funds than alter this. However, he did pass on to Washington that the LSFO could use some money to enhance the collaboration in this planning effort. No decision was made about this funding. John will report back to NWCOS when he knows more.

6. Review of Goals and Objectives in Light of Discussion on Alternatives

In order to demonstrate their support or opposition to the comments that BLM has received on its goals and objectives for vegetation and habitat, the subcommittee placed dots (red or green, to

demonstrate opposition or support) next to specific comments BLM has received. This exercise will help BLM and Keystone to incorporate comments into BLM's goals and objectives. The results of the dots exercise (tallies of dots per comment) are available in a separate document titled "Results of Goals and Objectives Dots Exercise," which is available at <http://nwcoss.org/Resources/RMP%20Comments/Results%20of%20Goals%20and%20Objectives%20Dots%20Exercise.pdf>.

7. Next Steps

Members of the subcommittee will continue to draft comments on BLM's goals and objectives and suggestions for the alternatives. For these to be included in the May versions of BLM working documents, they must be received by BLM and Keystone by April 29 (Jeremy Casterson, at jeremy_casterson@blm.gov or 970-826-5071 and Kristi Parker Celico at kparker@keystone.org or 800-574-8157, x 5848).