

**Northwest Colorado Stewardship
Special Designations and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Subcommittee Meeting
April 20, 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 an alternative shell on archaeology and cultural resources to the Special Designations Subcommittee.
BLM	Confirm status of wilderness inventory for Vermillion Basin. Was it "decided" or "determined" that the area has wilderness characteristics? This is unclear because BLM never responded to Moffat County's protest.
Josh Pollock	Explain what is gained by creating a prairie dog ACEC that cannot be achieved with other management tools.
BLM	Provide BLM's policy or Instruction Memorandum on Adaptive Management to NWCOS.
BLM	Provide the proposals for Research Natural Areas submitted by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program for the 1989 RMP.
BLM?	Get data on prairie dog populations in Ranglely Field.
T. Wright Dickinson	Send to the Special Designations Subcommittee listserv the document (from the Cattlemen's Association meeting?) on the impacts that Wild and Scenic River designation has on livestock grazing.
BLM	Provide assessment by archaeology expert of protection needs in the Resource Area. (This assessment is underway and should be completed by July of 2005.)
BLM	Clarify whether sagebrush goals in alternative shell are mandatory due to existing policy requirements.
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

Steve Bonowski, Vanessa Cameron, Jeremy Casterson, Jeff Comstock, T. Wright Dickinson, Tom Gray, Lori Hammel, Steve Hinkemeyer, Suzanne Jones, Cap Kuney, Reed Morris, Claire Moseley, Ann Oliver, Brad Petch, Marianna Raftopoulos, Luke Schafer, Rob Schmitzer, Jane Yazzie, Kristi Parker Celico, and Heather Bergman.

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

1. Review of Where We Are in the RMP Process
2. Briefing on Species Status
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:

- ♦ 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%20meetings.pdf>. If you were not at the meeting or are confused about NWCOS's role in the RMP process, please refer to this document.

The facilitator reminded the group that archaeology and cultural resources will also be part of its purview. BLM will provide an alternative shell that addresses these resources at the next subcommittee meeting.

2. Briefing on Species Status

Brad Petch asked the group to bear in mind that there are species that don't adapt well to change, and that these species should be kept in mind. Ann Oliver said that species point-occurrences that BLM maps show are a little misleading, because species need more than a point on the landscape as habitat. It is hard to know more about what many species need because these data are not gathered. BLM analyzes the impact of individual developments on a case-by-case basis, but does not monitor on a broad or regular basis. This may make large-scale adaptive management difficult.

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.

The existence of new data on prairie dogs was discussed, and the group agreed to look at this data, even though it is not provided by a public agency. The group also agreed to take advantage of the local knowledge that is available, such as Wes McStay's knowledge of sage grouse.

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.

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>.

Meaning of "Wild Lands"

Before the discussion of the alternative shell for special designations and wild lands began, the facilitator asked one of the environmental group leaders to clarify for the group what she means when she refers to "wild lands." She responded that, for her, wild lands are lands with wilderness character. She sees these lands as having the following characteristics (meeting the definition set out in the Wilderness Act):

1. 5,000 acres or smaller
2. outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive, unconfined recreation (which to her means non-motorized, non-mechanized recreation)
3. primarily natural
4. may contain other values (geological, educational, scientific)
5. imprint of man is substantially unnoticeable
6. once designated, no development, unless allowances are written into the designating legislation
7. the Wilderness Act has exemptions for livestock grazing that already exists and allows ranchers to use the minimal tool necessary to support their livestock, including motor vehicles. [A rancher responded by expressing concern that wilderness does not allow ranchers to make new improvements or use new technology to support their herds.] It also allows for other uses if they are already occurring when an area is designated.

In the interest of moving toward creative solutions as opposed to legal definitions, the facilitator asked the environmental leader to state simply what she is looking for on the CWP lands. She responded that she is looking for two things: 1) mineral withdrawal (including oil and gas), and 2) rules restricting use to non-motorized, non-mechanized activity. These areas should be unroaded (by BLM's definition) and primarily natural. She stated that her goal is to maintain the CWP lands in their current condition, so they can later be designated as wilderness by Congress.

It was pointed out that every state BLM office and even every field office has a different definition of lands with wilderness characteristics. There is no specific guidance from

Washington, D.C., except to say that staff should manage for the individual factors in these lands separately.

In response to the above discussion, several people who live in Moffat County indicated that they need to hear that the environmentalists are paying attention to their needs and livelihoods.

The group discussed the wilderness inventory that BLM has done on Vermillion Basin. To some, it is unclear whether or not the agency made an official determination that the area has wilderness characteristics. BLM will look into this and report back to the subcommittee.

Several participants expressed an interest in Vermillion Basin. Some want to keep it in its current condition, some want to keep its solitude and undeveloped character but still be able to use vehicles and new technology to maintain livestock, some want to preserve areas for motorized use, and some want to see transportation rights restored.

Goal Post Discussion: Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

After a brief summary of BLM’s alternative shell for special designations and wild lands, the group discussed and brainstormed where the goal posts should be. These were recorded on chart paper. The following is an effort to reproduce what was written on chart paper, with some minor changes made for purposes of clarification. The first and third columns represent the goal posts, and the column in the middle contains other ideas for BLM to consider in its alternatives.

# 1 Preservation	Other Ideas	#4 Production
Existing special designations	ACECs for primitive hunting	No ACECs
White prairie dog ACEC	Landscape-scale management (using adaptive management instead of special designations as a tool to protect special values). [Facilitator’s Note: there was a question about whether this is an intermediate idea or an idea that is even beyond alternative 4.]	Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) continue as now
Long Mountain ACEC	ACECs or other special designation for multiple use areas	
CWPs lands as ACECs		
1989 rare plant nominations as ACECs		

The group also discussed the possibility of creating an ACEC to protect archaeological and cultural resources.

Goal Post Discussion: Wilderness Study Areas (if released)

The subcommittee discussed how lands that are currently WSAs will be managed if they are released by Congress from WSA status. The first column represents the most preservationist goal post and the second column represents the most productive goal post.

Preservationist	Productive
All former WSAs are closed to minerals and motorized/mechanized use	All former WSAs are open to multiple use
Cold Spring Mountain become a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)	
Diamond Breaks is managed for backcountry recreation	
West Cold Spring is managed for semi-primitive, non-motorized use	

Goal Posts Discussion: Wild and Scenic Rivers

Jeremy Casterson provided some brief background about Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation. The 1989 RMP has no WSR designations. BLM has revisited a previous study of streams in the Resource Area, and found some areas eligible and suitable for designation. The group briefly discussed the goal posts for Wild and Scenic Rivers. The first column represents the least amount of Wild and Scenic designation and the second represents the most designation.

Least Designations	Most Designations
No designations	All eligible segments are found suitable, unless BLM’s recommendations are changed in response to BLM’s public comment period on Wild and Scenic Rivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaver Creek • Vermillion Creek • Yampa River segments 1-3

Other Discussions

The group discussed the appropriate role of BLM maintaining livestock grazing through the RMP. Some stated that it is important to address livestock grazing as more than a “mere use” of public lands, but as a valuable contributor to the protection of open space, rural values, and wildlife habitat and migration.

There was much discussion about how BLM could protect special values without creating special designations. Some participants said that leasing stipulations help do this, but others stated that they did not feel secure in the ability of stipulations to protect their values. The group agreed that most participants are looking for security for their own needs and values, and that one goal of the subcommittee is to write security into the RMP.

Several members of the subcommittee advocated adaptive management focused on outcomes as the primary tool for protecting special values, while others advocated special designations and management prescriptions. The group identified some concerns that some participants have about each approach:

Adaptive Management / Outcome-Based

- lack of security
- lack of resources to monitor

- too slow to adjust

Special Designations / Prescriptions

- too rigid
- too slow
- not an on-the-ground activity
- can't adapt
- hard for public to know about them without a map

The facilitator urged participants to keep these limitations in mind as they leave the meeting and start to generate their own ideas for options BLM could include in alternatives. Ideas that are based on adaptive management should address the itemized concerns that others have about it. Ideas that are based on special designations should address the itemized concerns that NWCOS participants have about it as well.

Creative Ideas

Several members of the subcommittee generated some creative ideas about how different groups' needs can be met in the RMP. [Facilitator's Note: These ideas are ideas that individuals mentioned in the course of discussions during the meetings of the Energy and Minerals Subcommittee and the Special Designations and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Subcommittee and written on chart paper. This list does not represent consensus.]

1. Exceptions to leasing stipulations
2. Lease trades/buy-backs
3. Lease size
4. Environmental or other credits to operators
5. Underground vault
6. Location of pads (in draw, etc.)
7. Directional drilling
8. Specified special designations
9. Reclamation / restoration, both interim and final
10. Ongoing mitigation
11. Regular operator reporting of surface disturbance
12. Mitigation for species we want to encourage
13. Seasonal use by recreationists (staggered by use-type)
14. Funds for private conservation or focus area for sage grouse, elk, or other species (federal funding, perhaps drawing lessons from Western Gas, which has taken steps to protect sage grouse near gas wells)
15. Outcome-based management in certain areas and/or for certain uses
 - a. Livestock
 - b. Some OHV use/areas
 - c. Oil and gas, factoring in changes in gas prices and the impact this could have on development

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 special designations and wild lands, 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).