

**Northwest Colorado Stewardship
Travel Management and Recreation 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
Rob Schmitzer/Jim May	Check on the regulations regarding changing routes or levels of use designations in WSAs.
Rob Schmitzer	Notify subcommittee when BLM has completed its coordination of multiple datasets regarding trails in Sandwash and a unified dataset is available.
Jeff Comstock/BLM	Check on ability to change rules to allow for Adaptive Management—what are possibilities? Jeff will contact Rich Whitley and Jeremy will send the question up the BLM chain of command.
Marianna Raftopoulos	Contact someone from the archaeology sector to encourage participation in subcommittee.
Rick Fisher	Contact someone from mountain biking sector to encourage participation in subcommittee.
Reed Morris	Continue efforts to get someone from river running sector involved in NWCOS/subcommittees.
Kristi Parker Celico	Continue Luke Schafer’s efforts to get someone from wild horse sector involved in NWCOS/subcommittees.
Cap Kuney	Bring 2002 map of Sandwash trails to next subcommittee meeting.
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, Rick Fisher, Suzanne Jones, Cap Kuney, Reed Morris, Ann Oliver, Brad Petch, Marianna Raftopoulos, Luke Schafer, Rob Schmitzer, Rob Stickler, Jeff Whilden, 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:

- 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.

BLM staff stated that the agency does not have a GIS layer for OHV routes. The group agreed that this poses a challenge to the subcommittee's work. Cap Kuney said that he has a map of Sandwash trails that was prepared in 2002, and he would be happy to share it. Rob Schmitzer said that BLM is currently coordinating a series of different datasets regarding trails in Sandwash, and he expects a unified dataset to be available the week of April 25, 2005.

Moffat County and BLM are currently engaged in proceedings to clarify the status of RS 2477 routes and the transportation map from the 1989 RMP. Concerns were expressed about BLM making management decisions for the Little Snake Resource Area (LSRA) without knowing the fate of RS 2477 routes, as possible future route designations could impact management decisions.

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.

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>.

Rob Schmitzer summarized his views regarding BLM’s current direction in travel and recreation. [Facilitator’s Note: As a reminder, BLM staff are encouraged to put ideas forth during these meetings and are not expected solely to report formal BLM policy or positions.] Rob believes that there should be some open play areas. He also said that during the RMP revision process, BLM will not shut down any existing trails unless there is evidence of a specific, significant negative impact from off-highway vehicles (OHVs) or other recreation users. Should such an impact be found, BLM could do an emergency closure, closing trails to OHVs, hikers, or other users. Rob reminded the group that BLM will prepare a Travel Management Plan (TMP) in the next 5 years, and the TMP may affect the status of existing trails.

Rob noted that there is no official guidance on how much land in the Resource Area should be open or closed (to OHV use) or restricted to existing or designated trails. However, Rob stated that BLM nationally is moving toward more active management of travel and recreation. Monitoring travel management and recreation impacts is a big job, and Rob said that BLM will need the help of stakeholders, citizens, and users to stay on top of it.

Goal Post Discussion for OHV Use

After this summary of BLM’s alternative shell for travel and recreation, the group discussed and brainstormed where the goal posts should be for OHV use. 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 two outside columns represent the goal posts. The middle column represents intermediate ideas. Although the group originally said that the current RMP was the “most open” option, it was later determined that some existing special designations could be opened to OHVs, making the current RMP an intermediate alternative. Without addressing any particular goal post option or alternative, the group discussed the possibility of closing some OHV use areas while energy resources are extracted and then reopening them after extraction is complete.

Most Open	Intermediate Ideas	Most Closed
WSAs are opened to some degree (if allowable by law)	Current RMP; 71% of LSRA is open	WSAs continue as now
ACECs, if they exist, are open		ACECs, if they exist, are closed (including protection of archaeological and/or cultural resources)
CWPs are open		CWPs are closed
SRMAs, whose focus would vary, would be open		SRMAs can be open or closed, depending on area focus (i.e., SRMAs aimed at providing high OHV use would be open)
Sensitive soil areas would be limited to existing routes		Sensitive soil areas are closed
Sensitive plant areas would be limited to existing routes		Sensitive plant areas are closed
Critical wildlife areas would be open		Critical wildlife areas have seasonal closures

Isolated parcels of BLM lands surrounded by private lands would be open		Isolated parcels of BLM lands surrounded by private lands are closed
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WSAs: Wilderness Study Areas
 ACECs: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
 CWPs: Lands in the Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal
 SRMAs: Special Recreation Management Areas
 LSRA: Little Snake Resource Area

Goal Post Discussion on Travel Management Plan (to be completed within 5 years)

Most Open	Most Closed
Except where the law requires, keeping existing WSAs closed, entire LSRA is open	Sensitive areas that have been damaged are rehabilitated
	WSAs, ACECs, CWPs, and SRMAs (as appropriate) are closed
	Rest of LSRA is restricted to designated routes
	No play areas

Discussion on Play Areas

This discussion did not focus on identifying goal posts for play areas, but rather on brainstorming where play areas would be and what they might look like. Individuals identified the following factors/ideas that they would like BLM to keep in mind:

- play areas are out of sight of the highway
- the south end of Sandwash is a play area
- creation of areas that are just for single-track users and areas that are for double-track users
- creation of a motorized recreation SRMA that would function as a play area, but might have different areas designated for single-track and double-track use
- washes could be closed seasonally but open to some kind of OHV use, with the impacts to wild horses mitigated
- use of travel management to enhance harvests (i.e., allowing hunters to use OHVs for animal retrieval)
- need to clarify boundary issues with the state—where routes cross out of BLM lands
- adaptive management: create “polygons”/particular areas for particular motorized experiences (single-track, double-track, etc.); also possible to use adaptive management to mitigate impacts of OHV use

Goal Post Discussion on Recreation Overall

Recreation Is More Dispersed	Recreation Is More Managed
No SRMAs for specific recreation uses	SRMAs that focus on specific recreation uses in Cross Mountain, Serviceberry, Cedar Mountain, South Sandwash, Little Yampa (expanded); some more developed than others
CWPs are not managed for particular recreation	CWPs are managed for backcountry use

uses	
No areas or special designations for cultural resources	Creation of one or more areas to protect cultural resources
No areas or special designations for use by commercial outfitters	Creation of one or more areas for use by commercial outfitters
Adaptive management as guiding principle of management	Special designations as guiding principle of management

Guideline Ideas for Alternatives

In addition to the above discussions, several members of the group identified the following general guidelines for travel and recreation alternatives:

- areas for backcountry hunting corresponding with wild lands
- seasonal restrictions
- time of day closures

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 travel management and recreation, 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).