

**Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS)
Vegetation and Habitat Subcommittee
May 27, 2005 and May 31, 2005
Meeting Summary**

Action Items (both days)

BLM (Jeremy)	Check on the currency of BLM's link to the Colorado Natural Heritage database and report back to the subcommittee.
Keystone	Post BLM guidance on sage-grouse on NWCOS website. [Facilitator's Note: This document has been posted and is available at http://nwcoss.org/Subcommittees/Veg%20Hab%20Mngmt/BLM%20Guidance%20Sage%20Grouse%20Mngmt.pdf or http://www.nwcoss.org/79505/44494.html .]
Valerie and Keystone	Talk to wild horse advocates and people with grazing permits in Sandwash about having a special meeting to address grazing and wild horses in Sandwash. Facilitator note: Keystone is in the process of scheduling this meeting for mid-July. If you would like information on it and have not been contacted, please notify Helen at hlittrell@keystone.org .
Reed Morris, T. Wright Dickinson, and Brad Petch.	Get together to discuss vegetation goals and alternatives regarding native and desirable non-native plants.

Attendance

May 27: Vanessa Cameron, Jeremy Casterson, T. Wright Dickinson, Rick Hammel, Andrea Minor, Reed Morris, Tim Novotny, Brad Petch, Renee Taylor, Kristi Parker Celico, and Heather Bergman.

May 31: Jennifer Bates, David Blackstun (intermittently), Vanessa Cameron, T. Wright Dickinson, Tom Gray, Rick Hammel, John Husband (intermittently), Suzanne Jones, Jim May, Wes McStay, Andrea Minor, Claire Moseley, Tim Novotny, Ann Oliver, Brad Petch, Marianna Raftopoulos, Beverly Rave, Renee Taylor, Jane Yazzie, Kristi Parker Celico, and Heather Bergman.

Agenda Items (Both days; each item is discussed below.)

- Criteria for alternative development
- Data needs
- Discussion of alternatives document
- Next steps

Criteria for Alternative Development

The group reviewed a list of criteria that participants were encouraged to keep in mind during their discussion of alternatives for the Resource Management Plan (RMP). The approved the following list (which includes the group's additions):

- Goalposts as wide as possible, within reason (legally possible)
- Combination of alternatives represents full range of options

- Each alternative is implementable/affordable (though the group agreed that something must be obviously unaffordable to not be considered)
- Range of alternatives recognizes the specific unique areas within the Little Snake Resource Area (LSRA) and supports the uniqueness while allowing for multiple use. (Management for “Best/Predominant Use” of an area, and determining what other uses can be accommodated.)
- Range of alternatives incorporates adaptive management, when appropriate
- Follows all existing laws about valid existing rights, multiple use, environmental laws, etc.
- Must be an RMP-level decision

The subcommittee agreed not to assume that all existing policies were written in stone, because some of these policies (or certain aspects of them) may be negotiable. The group also discussed the extent to which the RMP can drive funding for the LSRA (i.e., if something is written into the RMP, will its inclusion assure that funds are provided to fund it). When John Husband was consulted on this, he said writing something into the RMP will not guarantee funding for it, but that it will be easier to do something later if it is in the RMP, even if funds for it are expected to come from outside of BLM (i.e., from stakeholder partnerships).

Data Needs

The subcommittee discussed the data that are needed to inform their discussion. Some participants expressed an interest in seeing data from BLM’s Landscape Health Assessment, particularly as it pertains to the renewal of existing grazing permits and resource conflicts between livestock and wildlife. BLM staff referred these individuals to the Assessment of the Management Situation (AMS) that the Agency has already prepared, which includes this data. Tim Novotny reviewed BLM’s direction for sage-grouse management as written in the “National Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy” guidance. Tim told the group that this document is *guidance*, not policy, so there may be some flexibility in how it is applied. [Facilitator’s Note: This document has been posted on the NWCOS website at <http://nwcoss.org/Subcommittees/Veg%20Hab%20Mngmt/BLM%20Guidance%20Sage%20Grouse%20Mngmt.pdf> or <http://www.nwcoss.org/79505/44494.html>.]

Discussion of Alternatives Document

The discussion of alternatives centered on the alternatives matrix, which was projected on the wall for the group to see, discuss, and alter. The group discussed the goals and objectives for vegetation and habitat overall, as well as the specific management options for wild horses and vegetation. The changes that the group agreed upon, as well as some ideas that were discussed but not agreed upon, are recorded in a revised version of the alternative matrix, which is available at <http://nwcoss.org/Resources/BLM%20Documents/Draft%20Alternatives%206-01-05.pdf> or at <http://nwcoss.org/44201.html> (in the middle of the page, under “Alternatives”).

Next Steps

[Facilitator’s Note: The following discussion of Next Steps actually occurred at the Travel and Recreation Management Subcommittee Meeting on June 1, which was the last in a series of subcommittee meetings held between May 27 and June 1. It is repeated here because it applies to all subcommittees.]

Prior to discussing what the next steps for the subcommittees should be, the group briefly shared their ideas on what's going well in subcommittee meetings and what could be changed. The list of what's going well included getting to the substantive issues, having Booz Allen Hamilton represented in meetings, having John Husband and BLM staff in meetings, making progress in discussions, having a better understanding of how BLM writes RMPs and how hard it is to do so. The list of areas where change might be useful included getting things done faster, stretching out BLM's deadline, working in smaller groups, keeping momentum, prioritizing topics, giving specific topics for discussion to participants in advance, being more goal-oriented, and possibly doing a pretend land assessment to increase awareness.

The group agreed to have Keystone propose a series of smaller working groups to the Planning Committee. The idea is that smaller groups could tackle specific issues and then bring their work product back to the full subcommittee for discussion. It was believed that this might help the group to accomplish more and proceed at a faster pace. After this discussion, the group agreed to a revised meeting schedule, in which subcommittees will be meeting again on July 6 and 7. Exact scheduling details will be distributed to NWCOS as soon as they are available.