

MOFFAT COUNTY LAND USE BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Monday September 8, 2014

Attendees:

Steve Hinkemeyer, LUB
Dean Gent, LUB
Doug Wellman, LUB
T. Wright Dickinson, LUB
Burt Clements, LUB
Ken Bekkedahl, LUB
Burt Clements, LUB
Dave Watson, LUB
Jean Stetson, LUB
Jerod Smith, LUB
Tim Wilson, BLM
Amy Carmichael, BLM
Jeff Comstock, Moffat County Natural Resources Dept.

Call to Order:

Steve called the meeting to order at 7:04

Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

T.Wright / Jean / Unanimous

General Discussion

Elkhead Update

Burt discussed an invitation only meeting held last Friday regarding draining Elkhead. Burt reported zero escapement for 2 years and in 1995 the reservoir was drained and restocked. Burt felt that it took at least 7 years until a good fishery existed after draining the reservoir. The current proposal is to drain Elkhead and leave a 1000 acre foot pool to be poisoned. At the meeting it was decided that decisions would be made by consensus. One dissenting party would prevent poisoning of Elkhead. City of Craig and Fisherman both were opposed to poisoning. USFWS offered to restock reservoir with croppy, blue gill, etc, but bass and pike are generally the prized sportfishing experience. Burt felt strongly that a net should be considered over the existing spillway to prevent fish from leaving the reservoir. Debris buildup behind the net would be the big problem.

Discussion occurred about otters, osprey, eagles, and other predatory animals impacting native fish populations in the river. Discussion continued about water ownership in the reservoir and who has rights that would be affected by draining. In addition it was discussed what the endangered fish recovery plan allowed regarding reservoir draining.

T.Wright suggested that all those who were signatories to the Yampa Management Plan should be invited to future discussions.

Tim asked if an EIS with socioeconomic assessment was being written regarding draining for reservoir. He said BLM would be required to conduct an EIS in such a similar endeavor. Burt will follow up with the logic USFWS is using not to have to do an EIS with a social economic impact assessment.

Waters of the US:

Jeff reviewed the draft letter on Waters of the U.S. Discussion occurred about consultations regarding grading existing borrow ditches on county roads and issuance of building permits. Steve suggested adding comments related to recently published maps. T.Wright suggested adding comments about consistency and support of other entities whose comments we agree, i.e. National Association of Counties, National Cattleman's Beef Association, and the mining and oil and gas trade organizations. Tim brought up a concern that different Army Corps and EPA offices seem autonomous and staff will interpret the same rule in different ways. Jeff will incorporate all suggestions into the final letter.

BLM Update:

Medicine Wheel Road

Jeff provided a 4 year history of the issue and described the final settlement agreement with the county and BLM applying for a grant to research archaeological resources. Tim clarified that there was not a current effort to close the road like existed in prior times. He suggested the hill down to the medicine wheel is no longer a passable portion of the road and that it may be appropriate to close that section. T. Wright stated that it was a part of a loop road to the other side of the canyon and that the ATV club should consider maintaining it with their trail sized bulldozer. Burt recalled when that portion of the road was in better shape and that he had gone up and down the road in a two wheel drive vehicle.

Tim committed to writing a letter to the county saying circumstances have changed since the agreement to study the features along the road, and that there is no effort under way to close the road. The Land Use Board agreed that after a letter was received from BLM, the County should notify the State Historical Fund and return the grant, thus abandoning the initiative. Ken and Burt stated that the intent of the project originally began with an effort to assure that the road's 2477 status remain uncompromised.

Travel Management Planning

Tim reported that 2620 miles have been inventoried over the last three years. Isolated parcels will be focused on next year. BLM is expecting to be done with inventory mid summer next year. In the next two months public will be able to look a preliminary draft and begin commenting on the inventory effort. Tim emphasized the need for the public to be heavily involved in commenting on the inventory so that BLM could move to the implementation phase with accurate information.

T. Wright asked what the role of cooperating agencies would be. He suggested that the cooperating agencies need an advanced opportunity to comment on BLM's work. Jeff commented that the County's main interest would be differences between our 2477 map and the BLM inventory. Tim suggested a LUB meeting be held at BLM and GIS layers be shown on the large screen to differences could be discussed. The Land Use Board was supportive of this idea.

Steve asked about the timeline for completion. Tim stated that the BLM ROD stated that Travel Management Planning would be completed within 5 years of signing, and that BLM is moving down that path. October 2011 is the date ROD was signed. October in 2016 is 5 years after deadline.

Tim stated he doesn't yet know if the Sand Wash archaeology survey will be completed within 5 years. The consequence of not completing it, could be shifting the open area from open to limited. Discussion occurred about volunteer groups helping the BLM complete its survey. BLM will follow up with the local archaeology group to see what assistance they can provide .

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics:

Tim stated BLM had four interns helping to conduct the LWC inventory last summer. He clarified that LWC has nothing to do with Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's) and that LWC's are strictly an assessment tool for inventorying values, and that BLM has no intentions to undertake any planning effort that would result in implementing LWC's. BLM has to go through a planning process to amend a plan. He stated that BLM's web site lists characteristics that must be considered in a LWC evaluation. 5000 acre minimum, feeling of solitude, and other factors are considered. T. Wright asked why last time wilderness inventories were conducted, large public involvement outreach occurred and not this time. Tim stated that they were given six weeks to conduct the inventory, it was mandatory, and BLM had interns available, so they used the most efficient method they could. T. Wright asked if BLM could describe the differences between last inventory and this one, along with differences in criteria that were used between last time and this time.

T. Wright moved the LUB advise the Commissioners to write a letter asking BLM to explain the changes from last wilderness inventory to the current one, including additions or deletions of land between the last wilderness character inventory and the current one.

Steve commented that it is very likely the criteria for evaluation are different between then and now. T.Wright/Dean/Unanimous.

Closing Comments

Jeff described the comment period available for USFWS designating a stretch of the Yampa River between South Beach and Carpenter Ranch as Yellow Billed Cuckoo Habitat. Jean said if designated critical habitat, it can be burdensome on landowners. She cited Lynx habitat examples where landowners were placed in a defensive role regarding their properties. Burt stated that any taking out of cotton wood trees would be problematic, especially for fence building or other projects that would require removing trees, such as gravel pits. T.Wright moved that the LUB advise the commissioners to send a letter opposing the habitat designation. T.Wright/Doug/Unanimous

Future Agenda Items

Adjournment:

9:59 P.M.

T.Wright /Steve/Unanimous