

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND THE PUBLIC LANDS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE JOINT WORK SESSION
Tuesday, June 9, 2015**

A joint Work Session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors and the Public Lands Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, June 9, 2015 at 1:30 p.m. in the Executive Conference Room, at 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Patrick G. Call, Chairman; Ann English, Vice-Chairman; Richard R. Searle, Supervisor
Staff: Jim Vlahovich, County Administrator; Britt W. Hanson, Chief Civil Deputy County
Present: Attorney; Gussie Motter, Deputy Clerk of the Board
Attendees: Karen Simms, Melissa Warren, Amy Markstein, Tomothy Shannon, Adam Milnor, David McIntyre, Steve Saway, John Millican, John Ladd, Fred Davis

Chairman Call called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

THE ORDER OR DELETION OF ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION AT THE MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Presentation and discussion regarding the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Alternatives Development.

Chairman Call asked Tim Shannon to begin the presentation.

Mr. Shannon thanked the Board for their time and the opportunity to present their Resource Management Plan (RMP) alternatives. He indicated that David McIntyre, Amy Markstein and Adam Milnor would be the presenters for the afternoon. He noted that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has talked to about 150 people through 12 meetings about the alternative plans. He noted that the alternatives being presented this afternoon are draft alternatives and that the BLM is still welcoming input from stakeholders and interested parties. He noted that it is important to work with local government and expressed an interest in beginning quarterly meetings with the County like the meetings the County currently has with the National Park Service. Mr. Shannon then turned the meeting over to David McIntyre.

Mr. McIntyre asked the group to hold their questions until a break point about half way through

the PowerPoint to facilitate getting through the entire presentation. He stated that there would be time for questions at the end of the presentation as well. Public law 100-696 requires the BLM to manage the conservation area in a manner that conserves, protects, and enhances the riparian area. The same law stipulates that the BLM will only allow such uses that further the primary purposes for which the conservation area is established.

He went on to explain that the Resource Management Plan (RMP) dictates how the BLM will manage areas of public land over a period of time. He noted that the San Pedro River Riparian Management Plan (1989) and the Safford RMP (1992) only address the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) on a superficial level. Many changes have occurred since these documents were completed so a new document specific to the SPRNCA is needed to guide management decision making.

Mr. McIntyre next recounted what the BLM has done to date, starting with scoping from April 30, 2013 to September 27, 2013. During scoping 133 submissions were received with 499 unique comments. The majority of the comments had to do with recreation and travel, livestock grazing, watershed health and water resources.

The alternatives development began in December, 2013 and continues to the present. Mr. McIntyre admitted that the alternatives development phase has taken longer than the agency wanted but there have been educational forums, resource specific field trips, and an adaptive management forum as well as the collection of data and inventories including visual resources, wilderness characteristics, route inventory and user needs assessment.

Mr. McIntyre emphasized the importance of collaboration with cooperating agencies. At the present time, the BLM has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) with Cochise County, the City of Sierra Vista, Fort Huachuca, Arizona Department of Transportation, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

The MOU with Cochise County recognizes County expertise in multiple topics such as socioeconomics, county planning, geology and hydrogeology, biology, etc. The MOU also guides County participation in the development of policies and requires the BLM to give consideration to County input, especially in areas of county expertise. It also requires both parties to participate in good faith and make reasonable efforts to resolve disagreements as well as sets out how disagreements and inconsistencies are addressed.

BLM policy requires land use plans to consider local plans and policies and to coordinate with local government to ensure ongoing communication and direct involvement. The BLM also strives to stay informed of local policies germane to the planning effort and to seek consistency between BLM and local plans consistent with federal law. There is also a Governor's review when the final plan comes together.

The BLM considered Cochise County's policies and its Comprehensive Plan when writing alternatives and as a result have looked at assisting Fort Huachuca with meeting its environmental goals and minimizing impacts to the regional ground water aquifer. They are also evaluating opportunities to enhance water resources and the County's tourism potential.

Mr. McIntyre showed a graph depicting the steps to the approved RMP and indicated the finalized draft alternatives plan should be ready in January 2016 and a public comment period would most likely be from February to April of 2016. That would put a May 2017 date on the approved RMP.

Mr. McIntyre posed the question "Why are we here?" The purpose of these meetings has been to present the draft range of alternatives and to solicit specific feedback on the draft alternatives such as:

- Are the alternatives clear as presented?
- Is there anything missing?
- Is this a reasonable range of alternatives?
- Has the BLM been responsive to stakeholders' input?
- Are there specific County plans that we have not taken into consideration?

Mr. McIntyre stated that each alternative is an overall approach to managing the SPRNCA with a unique mix of management strategies and allowable land uses. He explained that the "no action" alternative depicts current management and that decisions moving forward would remain unchanged. The other alternatives suggest modification or additions to the current land use decisions based on input from scoping and from cooperating agencies and other stakeholders. The BLM sought input from a broad and diverse group of people.

Stating that this seemed like a good time for a break, Mr. McIntyre called for questions.

Ms. Kim Mulhern related that as a cooperating agency, the County would see an internal draft of the alternatives and would have an opportunity to give input before the draft went out to the public.

Mr. Fred Davis asked why the Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD) was not a cooperating entity.

Mr. McIntyre responded that the Hereford NRCD did not choose to take that route but that the BLM does meet with them often.

Mr. Davis inquired about grazing currently taking place in the SPRNCA to which Mr. McIntyre responded that there are four allotments.

Mr. John Ladd noted that the BLM is dealing with a lot of special interest groups, all with different priorities, but offered his opinion that the BLM has the data to make the right decisions.

There being no more comments, Mr. McIntyre moved back to the presentation regarding management alternatives. Alternative A calls for no action; alternative B has a resource use emphasis; alternative C exhibits restoration emphasis; and alternative D shows a natural processes emphasis. It was explained that alternative A, even though it is titled "no action" really means no change from the current management actions.

There are management strategies that would remain unchanged in each of the four alternatives. Those strategies are collaboration and coordination, water resources, land health standards, and monitoring. There are also strategies that are the same for all action alternatives, B, C, and D. They are natural resource objectives, priority species and habitats, fire and fuels management, areas of critical environmental concern, adaptive management framework, and cultural resource use allocations. Because of the urban and wild interface, all fires, natural cause or manmade, would be suppressed. This does not preclude a prescribed burn. The alternatives were then broken down to show the different approaches within each alternative.

One of the roadblocks for alternative A is that there is no adaptive management recognized. Responding to Chairman Call's question to define adaptive management, Adam Milnor explained that adaptive management allows for more flexibility in management because one can try a specific management strategy then look at the data, analyze it and take a different path if necessary. Chairman Call was assured that all policy decisions would be transparent and have a high level of stakeholder input.

The Forest Reserve Allotment concept was explained as a way of providing an area for lessees whose normally permitted allotments are under an approved restoration/recovery project or whose normally permitted allotments are temporarily unavailable due to emergency conditions such as wildfire. It would allow the BLM to analyze grazing as a restoration tool. It would be authorized on an annual basis and criteria for how and when it would be used would be outlined in the RMP.

Responding to a question regarding road construction in the NCA, it was explained that the BLM is required to provide a road to in-holdings but the road could be forced to skirt an area being managed for wilderness characteristics.

Alternative D, natural process emphasis, is the alternative which would prohibit grazing in the SPRNCA. Should that alternative be chosen, permittees would be given a two year notice.

It was pointed out that the BLM must chose an alternative in the draft, but it should be taken into consideration that the alternative could change. It was suggested that focus should be given to the specifics of the alternatives as the specifics may be moved to create an alternative E or F. Specifics could also be swapped among the four current alternatives but these are the specifics that will make up the final alternative. If there is a new specific one wants included, it must be given to the BLM immediately.

Mr. Saway inquired if the alternatives presented had to pass a "reasonableness" test to be included and was assured that they did. Mr. Saway elaborated by pointing out that alternative D would prohibit grazing while grazing has been proven to be better for the lands and their native grass covering than a hands off approach. He also cited the expense required to fence the SPRNCA to prevent grazing, declaring that no grazing did not make any sense for the health of the SPRNCA.

Mr. Davis concurred and wondered why none of the alternatives increased grazing as had been suggested by the Hereford NRCD.

Mr. Millican noted that grazing is a great tool for restoration and should be treated as such.

Ms. Mulhern praised the set of alternatives noting that much thought had gone into them and that BLM had indeed taken public comments into consideration. She called them real choices and predicted that they would be altered through the current process.

The BLM asked for comments by the end of the week. There was agreement that it would be good to hear what Ms. Mulhern and Ms. Darling have to say and perhaps enhance that.

Mr. Ladd brought up two points. First, there is a public misconception that the SPRNCA is a wilderness area. Second, the law that formed the SPRNCA stipulated that the SPRNCA should enhance the economy of the area and that point is not addressed by the alternatives.

Chairman Call addressed Mr. Shannon about the difference between cooperating and coordinating status. Mr. Shannon agreed that there is a difference in semantics across the BLM. Mr., Shannon suggested that there are opportunities to better our understanding of each others' views like having quarterly meetings.

Chairman Call thanked everyone for attending.

Chairman Call adjourned the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

APPROVED:

Patrick G. Call, Chairman

ATTEST:

Gussie Motter, Deputy Clerk of the Board

"PUBLIC PROGRAMS, PERSONAL SERVICE"