Hi all – Below are some brief notes from the Southwest RAC meeting in Montrose on 12/12/19.  I’ll send around the full notes and FM reports if/when I get them from BLM (Eric Coulter). Feel free to reach out to Eric on your own in the meantime with any specific questions.

SWRAC meeting schedule – SW RAC will not be meeting again until new members are appointed.  Much frustration was voiced about the hold-up in DC.  RAC unanimously agreed to write and send a letter to Sec Bernhardt and Perry Pendley requesting action on the applicants so that the SWRAC can begin scheduling meetings in 2020.  Betsy Bair from Gardner’s office was vocal in her encouragement that the RAC send this letter and also suggested cc’ing William Crozer at the White House (County liason?) at the White House.  Alyssa Logan from Bennet’s office also weighed in on importance of sending a letter to DC regarding the new appointments. Front Range and NW RACs are also on hold for the same reason.

UFO RMP – 150 protests were submitted. BLM specifically mentioned protest from Gunnison County.  Plan is being held up while BLM and the State address the State’s concerns, particularly related to oil and gas development (pad/disturbance densities). DC is waiting for those talks to wrap up then will publish protest report and finalize the plan.  No specific timeline mentioned.  Greg Larson said BLM is planning an “RMP Roadshow” once the plan is finalized to translate the plan for public consumption.  UFO will soon be posting draft EA for a Programmatic EA to facilitate vegetation removal projects throughout the FO—expected Dec 2019.  BLM working on several trail proposals in Delta County, including Escalante Triangle Trails System and Delta Regional Trail (DENCA) and Jumbo Mountain and Smith Mountain closer to Paonia; cultural inventories happening on those now.  Delta County also wants an “epic” trail (“Delta Dive”) similar to what is being finalized in GJFO (Palisade Plunge).

GJFO – Wayne Werkmeister is acting FM for now however Greg Wolfgang will be filling that role as an Acting FM for 120 days beginning this month (Greg comes most recently from Arcata, I think, but was at CRVFO for some time previously).  BLM has been unable to fill this position and other similar positions (GS-12+) because of hold-ups related to the BLM HQ move to Grand Junction (need to wait for existing staff to decide if/where they are moving, see what new applications come in from existing staff, etc., before offering up the position again).  Hoping to have a permanent FM in summer 2020.  BLM getting pressure from DC to open up travel plans to accommodate e-bikes, however as of now GJFO has no intention to do so.  GJFO wants to hear from the community more on this issue, after significant pushback from mountain bike community.  BLM intends to work with Mesa State to do trailhead surveys, etc this spring to get more public input on the idea before they move ahead with anything related to e-bikes.  Also, BLM is working to put together data we requested regarding the 214 miles of route designations that were deferred in the GJFO RMP/TMP.  Apparently, only 14 miles of the 214 will be changed at the request/demand of Mesa County—the rest will revert back to the original designations proposed in the PRMP.

TRFO – 55 comments on TAP 1 (Travel Management around Durango).  Most comments against e-bike access; by far most controversial issue related to the planning effort.  TAP2 is being queued up for 2020.  ACEC RMPA is being finalized. One protest received and is being reviewed; no timeline.  Gunnison SG Plan Amendment is on hold while BLM waits for USFWS to complete Special Species Status Assessment. There are currently no EOIs for leases in TRFO.

Let me know if you have any specific questions.

Thanks,

**Soren Jespersen**

Senior Field Representative

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