

Northern Utah Resource Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Teams Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Committee Members in Attendance: Brian Anderson, Clark Tucker, Dylan Evans, Julia Geisler, Kim Carson, Senator Ron Winterton, Paul Sanders, Representative Steve Handy, Wayne Simper, Susan Horrocks, Marissa Hacking-Oaks, Courtland Nelson, Ian Wight

Committee Members not in attendance: Mark Wilson, Jess Hoffberger,

Designated Federal Official (DFO): Dave Whittekiend

RAC Coordinator: Don Jaques

Others in attendance: Lars Christensen (Teams host), Grace Patrick, Mike Hyde, Louis Haynes

Welcome and Introductions: Committee members and participants introduced themselves with Don Jaques facilitating the introductions.

As members were joining, it was clarified that both committees had previously determined that a simple majority of members needed to be present to conduct business. However, for voting on project proposals, 3 of 5 of each of the members in each of the three categories would have to be present or otherwise participate through prior submitting votes.

Paul Saunders, chair, welcomed the committee and identified the agenda items.

Lars Christensen outlined norms for conducting business in the virtual meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities of RAC Members: Dave Whittekiend, DFO

RAC projects and funding is authorized under Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program. DFO approves projects for RAC, the committee provides recommendations. As DFO, Dave intends on recognizing the recommendations of the committee but ultimately has the responsibility of final approval. The committee has a chair and co-chair, and the committee is led by them. The responsibilities of the RAC are to review and recommend proposals to the Forest Service for funding under the SRS program. The Forest Service does not control, guide, nor work to influence the RAC. The Forest Service is here to assist; help; submit, recommend, and provide input regarding projects, but not to direct the committee in its focus or recommendations.

Each committee member has the responsibility of representing the categories they are nominated in. The goal of the committee is to work together to provide projects that will enhance the National Forests.

Question – Kim Carson: What are some of the greatest needs of the Forest Service right now.

Response - Dave W.: There are lots of important needs. However, anything that improves watersheds and improves stream flow is very important right now considering ongoing drought and demands for water.

Review of Guidelines: Paul and Clark led the committee in a discussion regarding operating guidelines. Use of previous guidelines by both the Ashley RAC and Uinta-Wasatch-Cache (U-W-C) RACs were reviewed.

A combination of the two previous committee guidelines will be completed. The following are highlights of recommendations/changes.

- Modify language regarding meeting locations due to requirement for virtual locations, refer to following USDA protocols.
- Voting on projects requires 3 of 5 members in each committee. Proxy votes prior to the voting meeting are allowed. However, if changes to the proposals occur during the meeting, the proxy votes would not be counted.
- *Use of funding in relation to county origination* - Substantial discussion among committee members occurred regarding the use of funds within the counties they originated. One suggestion was to utilize the available funding regardless of location.

An examination of the estimated funds that are available. There is not quite a 3 to 1 ratio of funds from the Ashley N.F. counties as compared to UWC N.F. counties.

Some committee members, including those representing elected officials, identified that the counties that determined to place more funds within the Title II program did so with an intent to benefit the National Forests in areas that would have the greatest benefit to their counties.

Concern was expressed by some committee members that if county commissioners or counties were not pleased with the way and locations where the funds are used, this could affect future determination of allocations by the counties.

Final suggestion was to carry forward a review of the county allocations during the project prioritization process.

- Change “hard copies of projects will be provided to committee members” to “Hard copies are available upon request”.
- Replace “Project sponsors must review proposals with county commissioners” with “Before a project is approved, Forest Service will facilitate communication with the respective county officials.”

Motion: (Paul Saunders)

The RAC combine the two operating guidelines from the Ashley RAC and U-W-C RAC and send these out to the committee for feedback and votes.

Second: Wayne Simper

Results: Vote was unanimous in favor.

Review of Criteria and Prioritization of Projects: Clark led committee in a review of the previous ranking and scoring systems for both RACs. There is a lot of overlap between the two previous criteria. A discussion of the similarities was completed, with changes to the scoring criteria made by recommendations of committee members.

Motion: (Ron Winterton)

Accept the criteria that has been presented combining the Ashley with the U-W-C RACs and move forward with this for ranking proposals.

Second: Courtland Nelson

Results: Motion passed with majority in favor. Susan Horrocks dissenting

Update on Project Solicitation: Don Jaques

There have been 31 projects submitted, with 23 projects from Ashley counties and 8 projects from U-W-C counties. Project proposal requests total \$1,363,581.

A spreadsheet of the projects was provided. This has been sent out to committee members. The individual projects can be viewed at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ashley/workingtogether/advisorycommittees/?cid=fseprd938847>

or by visiting the Ashley NF webpage then Working Together/Advisory Committees and by then clicking on "Click here to view Title II Funding Requests submitted" on that page.

RAC members will access the projects for review by utilizing the link. However, if hard copies are needed, committee members can contact Don Jaques or Loyal Clark for hard copies to be sent.

Field Trips to Review Prior Projects: Dave Whittekiend

Due to COVID-19 circumstances, there is still a question of when we can do this. Dave requested that the committee highlight previous projects completed that might be valuable to view. Recommendation for RAC to look at opportunities to do this.

Note: there was not a determination of when or how this would happen.

General Q&A: Paul opened the meeting for questions and comments from other individuals joining the meeting.

Mike Hyde, Duchesne County – Expressed appreciation for RAC and work being done for watershed supply and restoration. Would like to see funds get spread equally around where county funds came from. Very interested in Project #23, Badland Trail Improvements.

Grace Patrick – Expressed appreciation for work being done.

Other Comments:

Question: When will we be reviewing the projects?

Response: RAC members can begin reviewing the projects now. The ranking criteria will be sent out shortly after this meeting.

Question: Will project proponents be available to answer questions and will they be given an opportunity to present? How long will be given?

Response: Yes, they will be allowed to respond to questions and should be prepared to do so, but presentations will not be given. RAC members should review projects and come prepared for recommendations at the meeting.

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Response: The ranking meeting will be September 22 at 6:00 and has been published in the Federal Register.

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Discussion: There is a need to be able to move through the projects quickly during the meeting. The math for reviewing 31 proposals would likely make this impossible to complete in one meeting. A recommendation was made to set another meeting to be able to ensure all proposals were able to be reviewed.

Motion: (Susan Horrocks)

Set a second meeting for September 29 for project review and prioritization.

Second: Kim Carson

Results: Motion passed unanimously

Question: When is the deadline for when recommendations must be completed?

Response: October 21 (or approximate thereon) is the date that the charter will expire. If the charter is reinstated, then there is not a deadline. The RAC will work towards being complete by this date regardless.

Motion: (Wayne Simper)

Motion to adjourn

Second: Kim Carson

Results: Unanimous – Meeting to adjourn.

Clarification for ranking and scoring for next meeting – There was discussion after the meeting requesting a clarification of ranking and scoring for next meeting. The following clarifications were given.

- Each RAC member will score each project and come prepared to the meeting to provide a vote to approve or not approve each project. They should also come prepared with project scores and ranking.
- There will be a vote on each project to approve or disapprove. There needs to be 3 votes from each category to move forward on projects.
- Once projects have been approved, then a prioritization is made based on submission of the ranking scores.
- The voting of recommendation approval and prioritization ranking will then be provided to the DFO.