

## Resource Advisory Committee Meeting September 2, 2010

### RAC Members:

Jerry Paxton – Carbon County (Chair)  
Arla Strasser – Carbon County  
Linda Fleming – Carbon County  
Sonja Macys – Routt County  
Barbara Vasquez – Jackson County  
Jim Ficke – Routt County (Alternate)

John Rich – Jackson County (Vice Chair)  
Win Dermody - Routt County  
Jack Berger – Carbon County  
Jerry Schmidt – Albany County  
Doug Monger – Routt County  
Ron Ivensen – Carbon County (Alternate)

### Forest Service:

Phil Cruz  
Steve Best  
Diann Ritschard  
Melissa Martin  
Becky Romios

### Public Attendees:

Don Brinkman

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Update instructions included in the project solicitation form. Emphasize the importance of including sufficient project detail, pictures (if feasible), and project prioritization if more than one proposal is submitted – **January 2011 (Diann Ritschard)**
- Include one or two good examples of RAC project proposals on the Forest Service web page – **prior to February 2011 (Diann Ritschard)**
- Solicitation of new projects – **January/February 2011 (Forest Service)**

### DECISIONS

- Carbon County may make decisions regarding project selection without a RAC quorum. This applies only to those projects that are included on the spreadsheet (9/1/2010) and that have already been previously discussed by the RAC. They are to email RAC members to keep them apprised of their decisions.

### NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 24, 2011 at 9:30 in Walden.

### NEXT MEETING TOPICS

- Review of proposals in response to the February 2011 project solicitation

### MEETING NOTES

#### Re-cap Decisions

Jerry Paxton asked each county to provide an update of project decisions made at the July 22, 2010 meeting.

**Jackson County - Barbara Vasquez:** The project spreadsheet (dated 9/1/10) has been updated to reflect the following changes: 1) the Pitch Pine Fuels Treatment project has been deleted from the list of recommended projects – this project has too many unresolved questions at this point in time; and 2) the Grizzly/Helena Trail Crossings project has been added to the list of recommended projects. Jackson County now has four projects listed on the spreadsheet (previously had three), all of which are recommended for implementation (yellow on the spreadsheet). The first three projects (JCOEN outdoor education project, the Ninegar Creek Realignment, Grizzly Trail improvement) are recommended for the requested funding level. The remaining funds for Jackson County, minus the \$2,500 set aside for RAC expenses, will be awarded to the Grizzly/Helena Trail Crossing.

**Alb any County – Jerry Schmidt:** There have been no changes to the three projects recommended at the July 22, 2010 meeting. Albany County continues to recommend: implementing their portion of the MRB Road Decommissioning project (\$25,000); contributing \$2,000 to the MBR Ditch Clearing project; and contributing \$49,000 to the Lake Creek Fish Passage Restoration project. Jerry would like the Forest Service to work with partners to increase partnership funding for the restoration project.

**Routt – Doug Monger:** Routt County will continue to contribute \$100,000 to the Buffalo Pass Road Improvement project. No changes have been made since the last meeting.

**Carbon - Arla Strasser:** Carbon County continues to need more information related to the MBR Decommissioning project. They do not want to spend money closing roads if enforcement isn't available. They also do not want to deny access to an area that has traditionally had access. Diann R. indicated that the NEPA documents prepared for this project identified all of the roads and trails that needed to be closed as well as those that would be retained to create off-road motorized opportunities. Steve B. added, however, that no matter how diligent our survey efforts are, a few routes invariably either get missed or are created after the fact. Steve agreed that it would be good to have a field trip to lock things in; he will work with Dave Gloss (hydrologist) to establish a field trip date and time.

Arla also indicated that she met with Steve B. regarding the Ryan Park Roads and Fire Protection project; Carbon County had additional questions following the last meeting. After looking at maps and reviewing the area on ground, they determined the following: 1) there is a washout along Road 231 needs attention; and 2) there are some culverts along Road 279 that need to be replaced. They will try to revisit the Ryan Park project area during the abovementioned field trip and decide if they want to include it in their list of recommended projects.

**MOTION (Jerry P):** Jerry motioned to defer the decision making process to Carbon County regarding their projects that have already been discussed by the group but where questions still remain. After some discussion, the group decided that Carbon County can move forward and make their decisions; they will keep the RAC up-to-date via email. The vote resulted in all "ayes." Motion carried.

### **Finalize Paperwork**

The following comments/questions were put forth by RAC members:

- **Wyn D.** asked Phil to explain how the process works to actually spend the money. **Response:** Jerry P. and Phil C. will sign the necessary forms today and Phil will get the information to Forest Service budget personnel. If the applicant is a Forest Service employee, that person will put together what's called a "work plan;" this plan sets up an accounting system against which charges can be made. Since we're near end of the fiscal year (ends September 30), dollars may not be available until the beginning of October. Another factor to consider is who will be

completing the work. If Forest Service employees complete it, projects may move along a little more quickly as we could get out on the ground right away rather than having to wait for contracts and a bidding process. If project work is accomplished through a contract, we will try to expedite the process as much as possible. Phil also mentioned that every proponent of a selected project will get a letter letting them know that their project has been approved. The project proponent will likely be required to report back to RAC regarding project progress.

- **Barbara V.** asked how the process works when all of money gets spent on the outside, like the school project. **Response:** Phil C. indicated that a similar process to that described above would be followed, albeit with our grants and agreements people rather than our budget people. These individuals have been responsive and should be able to get to the RAC project proposals fairly quickly. It should not take months!

Phil C. later offered the following clarification: Purely educational projects that don't require work on ground are generally not part of the RAC process. However, Diann R. has made the necessary contacts for the Walden project and we should be able to get this one implemented.

- **Jerry P.** speculated that that it will likely be next spring before we see tangible results. **Response:** Phil C. indicated that that seems reasonable. Although we are trying to tie up our field season right now, we will make every effort to create opportunities to implement project proposals. Jerry P. added that many projects will need supplies; we need to be cognizant of that when developing a project schedule.
- **John R.** questioned whether or not the use of private contractors would slow the process down. **Response:** Phil C. indicated that, technically, a competitive procurement process has the potential to be more time consuming. However, our goal is to seek individuals from the local community which could expedite things. The Forest Service will continue to be forthright regarding most expeditious way to get projects accomplished.
- **Doug M.** stated that he thought that we had approved all of the projects at the last meeting; he was concerned about wasting time at this meeting and expressed that he would like to see things move forward more quickly. **Response:** Phil C. assured him that we're pretty much where we need to be – aside from a few outstanding questions from Carbon County. Currently, there are nine (9) forms waiting to be signed.
- **Wyn D.** asked if we could determine an appropriate feedback loop for RAC updates. **Response:** Phil C. indicated that the Forest Service would be willing to provide status updates at timeframes established by group. **Jerry P.** stated that he would like a formal update every couple of months; he also indicated that we could communicate more frequently in between if things come up. **Sonja M.** stated that she would like to know when projects are under contract; **Barbara V.** added that she would like to know if the contracts go to local entities. **DECISION:** The group decided that there is not a need for scheduled, periodic updates. They would prefer to focus on milestones (i.e., contract status).

### **New Member Nomination**

Diann R. indicated that we currently have an application from Chuck Shawver to replace Jerry Heggie (Albany County). The paperwork will soon be signed and sent to the Washington Office. Chuck's timber background and expertise fit perfectly for the vacant RAC position. We also still have three (3) alternate positions pending approval. Unfortunately the process takes awhile.

Wyn D. asked why we have an alternate list if we're not going to make a selection from it. **Response:** Phil C. indicated that we are striving to have representation from each county. Members from Albany County have been the hardest to recruit; that's why we're focused on trying to get an Albany County member now. We could slide one of the alternates in but, if they're not the best person for the job, then it behooves us to find someone new. Albany County commissioners specifically requested more representation from Albany County.

### **Travel Reimbursement**

Becky R. informed everyone of the government's travel reimbursement program, indicating that RAC members need to have a profile established in our "Gov Trip" system for reimbursement to occur. She had previously sent out the appropriate paperwork that needs to be returned to the Forest Service; she brought extra copies that could be filled out before people leave today's meeting. She also disseminated forms for recording approximate mileage. Once the appropriate paperwork has been submitted, Becky will create a voucher for the reimbursement.

**Caveat:** RAC members may only be reimbursed with RAC funds if they are not being reimbursed from another source. Even if you do not feel the need to be reimbursed, it would still be good to get people in the system. If you are carpooling, only the driver is to submit the forms for reimbursement.

**NOTE:** John R. indicated that Jackson County allocated all of their money to projects – they would like some money taken from the Grizzly project to cover their expenses. Routt County is in the same position and will need to take some money from the Buffalo Pass Road project

### **Next Round of Funding – Project Solicitation**

Diann R. indicated that we will know how much money we have for 2010 by February; we plan to solicit for projects at that time. She also mentioned that we will look at ways to improve the solicitation form before February.

#### **Solicitation Form Discussion**

Jerry S. stated that he believes the form is fine the way it is – how people use it could be improved. Some people need to "jazz" up their proposals. Jerry P. added that he, too, believes the form itself is good but suggested improving the instructions - not just in terms of what is needed but what types of information is appreciated. Barbara V. suggested including one or two examples on the Forest Service website of good quality projects (E Fork Weir project) for people to use as a template. She further suggested including two types of examples – one from the Forest Service and one from an external source.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Include more information about the status of NEPA (done/almost done). There was some confusion about whether NEPA was completed or not.
- Include information relative to the collaborative nature of the project and what additional sources of funds were being applied.
- Multi-district projects should be consolidated into one proposal instead of several diffuse proposals. Each district would need to identify how their respective county would benefit.

### **Next Steps**

Right now, the next step is to set a date for the next meeting. The group decided tentatively on March 24 in Walden, Colorado.

## **Public Forum**

Jerry P. stated that he has been getting phone calls from the media regarding the RAC process. He questioned whether or not he is at liberty to divulge information. **Response:** Diann R. indicated that these are open meetings with open meeting policies – reporters can show up at any time and we can answer their questions. There is also no problem with any RAC member disseminating information. She further indicated that the Forest Service will prepare a news release once the forms are signed – reporters may contact RAC members for more detail if they so desire. It is common for RAC groups to get media interest.

The Forest Service has prepared some “talking points” that may be used to ensure consistent messages. Diann presented them to Arla S. after the meeting due to the interview she had later in the day. Diann will disseminate the “talking points” to remaining RAC members via email.

## **Miscellaneous**

Jim F. spoke about a fire lookout project that he would like the RAC to consider. Currently there are three (3) unmanned lookout towers on Medicine Bow-Routt NFs. Manning these lookouts would be a relatively inexpensive way to cover a lot of ground and it would provide an opportunity to increase public contacts/information. He discussed the use of fire triangulators and how they can be used to pinpoint a fire in a short amount of time. He indicated that it would cost about \$20,000 to get the program up and running, including the cost of the triangulators. The group recommended that Jim submit a proposal in February.

**Meeting adjourned - 11:41 a.m.**