

Meeting Minutes

Idaho Panhandle RAC

March 8, 2019

Attendees

RAC Members (quorum present)

Glen Bailey

Jeff Connolly

Alan Harper

Phil Hough

Leslie Marshall

Ben Mello (via phone)

Tim Mueller

Ed Short

Brad Smith

Laura Wolf

US Forest Service

Jeanne Higgins (Forest Supervisor, Designated Federal Officer)

Phillip Blundell (RAC Coordinator)

Shoshana Cooper (Public Affairs Officer)

Kevin Knauth (Bonners Ferry District Ranger)

Public

Tim Kastning (Representative Fulcher's Office)

Dale Schrempp (Priest River Back Country Horsemen)

Pat Trask (Priest River Back Country Horsemen)

Minutes

Meeting was called to order by Jeanne Higgins at 9:10 a.m.

Introductions

All present introduced themselves, gave a bit of personal background, and described their interest in the Idaho Panhandle RAC (RAC).

Binder Overview

Group went over the new binders given to all RAC members as well as a general overview and discussion of their contents.

Binder contain information such as:

- RAC Charter
- Potential Bylaws for adopting
- Laws
- Proposals
- Treasury
- Miscellaneous Info

Discussion on the Bylaws example in the binder. It was unknown if it had ever been adopted by the RAC. Alan Harper, the longest serving member, was not familiar with any RAC bylaws. Members decided to go over the provided bylaws at a later time and determine if they should be adopted.

Quorum was discussed. Under the law, it will take a majority of members from each RAC Category (A, B, and C) to constitute a voting quorum. At present, the RAC has three members in Category A and four members in each of Category B and Category C. Each Category can have up to five member for a 15-member total.

Discussion on the timing of getting the funds obligated. According to Washington Office (WO) guidance, the RAC has until September 20, 2020 to initiate projects to be approved and until September 30, 2021 to obligate the funds. It was clarified that the RAC's approval of projects needed to meet the 2020 deadline and the obligation/use of funds would need to occur by 2021.

Discussion on how the funding is derived. Jeanne went in to a brief legislative history of the RAC and an overview of electing for Title II or Title III funds.

Jeanne pointed out that the new charter allows the RAC to make recommendations in regards to fees for recreation. This has traditionally been, and remains, a role of the BLM RACs. Therefore there is likely little reason to utilize this ability.

Roles

Jeanne clarified that the role of the RAC is to make recommendations to the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) on how money should be spent, and that she, as DFO, could not follow through with any recommendation that would be in violation of law, regulation, or policy.

The role of the RAC Coordinator is that of the day-to-day operations of the RAC. This includes organizing and maintaining all info on the RAC, coordinating the meetings with the elected RAC Chairperson and members, and responding to requests from the Forest Service's Regional and Washington Offices.

Nominations

An overview of the statute and charter showed that the RAC would need to appoint a Chairperson and could choose to appoint a Vice Chairperson.

Alan nominated Glen to serve as Chair citing his work in the public arena.

Tim nominated Alan to serve as Chair citing his extended tenure as RAC member.

After discussion between Glen and Alan, they each decided that Glen would prefer to run for Chair and Alan would prefer to run for Vice Chair. Ed seconded both nominations.

All members voted affirmative via voice-vote to electing Glen as Chair and Alan as Vice Chair. There were no opposing votes.

Given the nature of the agenda for this meeting, Glen yielded to Jeanne to carry out the remainder of the conference, but reserved all future voting matters for the day to be managed by himself.

Funds

Members discussed both Administrative Funds and Project funds.

Admin Funds: Under the current rules, 10% of the RAC funds can go to administration, travel, and per diem for the members.

- Glen entertained a motion to address use of admin funds
- Brad moved that the RAC allow up to 5% of the funds to be utilized for travel purposes for those members whose time was not being covered by their employer. Reimbursement would be made at the federal rate.
- Ed seconded the motion.
- All members voted affirmative via voice-vote to approve the admin funds measure. There were no opposing votes.

Project Funds: Members discussed what project money may be used for. Members looked to the law and how recreation and roads is the focus.

Solicitation

Topic of the process for solicitation of projects to the public started with a discussion on how the public has been made aware in the past. The Forest Service typically notifies the public through issuing a press release to each county served by the RAC, posting information on the IPNF Forest Service webpage, and via a social media outreach on Facebook. Note that Federal Register Notices and Legal Ads are reserved for actual meetings and are required by law. Any postings beyond this (e.g. formal advertisements) could be done by the RAC, but would need to be voted on.

Emphasize for Solicitation:

- Posting of agenda for upcoming meetings
- Readily providing forms for project proposals to the public
- Ensuring guidelines for completing project proposal forms are available

Project Proposal Form Updating:

- Section for describing how the proposal benefits National Forest System lands
- A word or page limit for the project description
- Check-box for describing what authorized category of project the proposal falls under
- Citation of the Secure Rural Schools governing statute
- Section requesting a description of the project timeline
- Identification of whether partial or full funds are being sought
- Verification on whether support from the local Forest Service unit has been obtained
- Accompanying form instructions or examples of completed forms to ensure adequate completion of the form

The RAC determined that the period for submission of project proposals to the RAC for consideration should run from April 1 to June 1.

Public

Priest River Back Country Horsemen questioned whether they could submit project proposals directly or if they would have to go through the Forest Service. It was affirmed that any project proposal from the public can come directly to the RAC.

Next Meeting

It was determined that June 21 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. would work as the next meeting date to begin looking at project proposals. Future meeting dates will be affirmed soon by the RAC Coordinator so that the Federal Register Notice may be efficiently completed.

Meeting was adjourned by Glen Bailey at 11:57 a.m.

Key Items

Decisions:

- Glen Bailey was elected as RAC Chairman.
- Alan Harper was elected as RAC Vice Chairman.
- The RAC will allow up to 5% of the funds to be utilized for travel purposes for those members whose time was not being covered by their employer. Reimbursement would be made at the federal rate.

Determinations:

- The period for the solicitation of project proposals will run from April 1, 2019 to June 1, 2019.
- The next RAC meeting will occur on Friday, June 21, 2019 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Outstanding issues/questions to be resolved by RAC Coordinator:

- Whether there is any liability for the RAC members for the recommendations they make to the DFO.
- Additional research needed to ensure the bylaws are not mandated by statute or charter.
- Obtain and disseminate the form for RAC travel reimbursement.
- Get web links on project information to the RAC
- Update the project proposal forms and forward to RAC for approval. If issues arise, the RAC Chair will lead their resolution among the members.
- Organize future meeting dates for publication in the Federal Register Notice.