
WYOMING PUBLIC LANDS INITIATIVE
Sublette County Advisory Committee Official Minutes

Pinedale, Wyoming
August 22, 2016

A scheduled meeting of the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative, Sublette County Advisory Committee, was held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room at the County Courthouse on this date. Committee members present were Co-Chairmen Dan Smitherman and Coke Landers, and committee members Bill Lanning, Mike Crosson, Mike Smith, Mike Henn and Monte Skinner. Committee member Dave Bell was absent from the meeting. Steve Smutko, Jessica Western and Selena Gerace were present to represent the Ruckelshaus Institute. Sublette County Planning Director Bart Myers was present to represent the Sublette County Board of County Commissioners.

Co-Chairman Smitherman called the meeting to order at 8:10 AM, with Co-Chairman Landers arriving at 8:13 AM. Co-Chairman Smitherman reviewed the meeting agenda and welcomed everyone in attendance. Co-Chairman Smitherman explained that the Ruckelshaus Institute would facilitate the meeting and invited Steve Smutko to present the agenda items.

Mr. Smutko began by having the Committee members introduce themselves and provide a brief background of their experience and interest in natural resource issues. After the Committee members had introduced themselves, Mr. Smutko introduced Jessica Western and Selena Gerace who were present on behalf of the Ruckelshaus Institute. Mr. Smutko next provided a brief overview of the anticipated involvement of the Ruckelshaus Institute in the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative and assistance available to the Sublette County Advisory Committee. Before moving on with the next agenda item Mr. Smutko invited members of the public in attendance to introduce themselves.

After introductions of public present for the meeting, Mr. Smutko asked Sublette County Commissioner Joel Bousman to discuss the purpose of the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative. Commissioner Bousman began by thanking the Committee members for their interest in the process and explaining the difficulty the Commissioners faced in choosing an eight member committee from so many qualified applicants. Commissioner Bousman stressed the need for the individual committee members chosen to coordinate with others from the interest group they have been chosen to represent. Commissioner Bousman then provided a brief history of wilderness study areas, including how these study area came into existence. Commissioner Bousman continued by addressing the three Wilderness Study Areas in Sublette County and the desire to develop a Wyoming solution to the study areas within the State. Commissioner Bousman explained that participation in the State led public lands initiative is voluntary for the counties and that the end result of this process would be legislation at the federal level to either permanently designate the study areas as wilderness, release the wilderness designation or perhaps some solution in between those two results. Commissioner Bousman explained that the recommendations of the Committee will go to the County Commissioners, after adoption of the Committee recommendations those recommendations would then go to the Governor's Office and eventually to the federal congressional delegation in the form of a legislative package addressing Wilderness Study Areas on a Statewide basis. The Committee members were encouraged by Commissioner Bousman to go to the

Wyoming County Commissioners Association website to learn where other participating counties are at in the process. Commissioner Bousman stressed that the purpose of this initiative is to develop a locally led solution to the current status of Wilderness Study Areas and that the Sublette County Commissioners chose to involve the Ruckelshaus Institute to assist the committee in the development of a charter and in facilitating an understanding of collaborative decision making and to assist in developing a working relationship between committee members. In closing, Commissioner Bousman stated that the County Commissioners support the continued involvement of Ruckelshaus should the Committee want that support. Commissioner Bousman concluded by informing the Committee that the Board of County Commissioners will not be directly involved in this process and that County Planning Director Bart Myers will be the liaison between the County Commissioners and Advisory Committee. Dave Hohl, from the public in attendance, stated that it should be noted that the study areas are federal public lands that belong to everyone in the nation and focusing on local issues does not guarantee passage by Congress, which represents the entire nation. Commissioner Bousman responded that the best decisions are made at the local level, where there is a better understanding of the issues. Committee member Monte Skinner asked Commissioner Bousman about the timing for the Committee to develop recommendations. Commissioner Bousman responded that it is anticipated this will be a two year process, involving field trips to each of the study areas in the County and that while the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service are not taking positions on the study areas, these agencies will be a valuable resource with respect to the background and history of the wilderness study areas. Co-Chairman Smitherman stated that while the primary focus will be on the three study areas in the County there is also the opportunity to look at the larger landscape if the needed. Commissioner Bousman stated that the Committee should not lose sight of the end purpose of this process, which is to develop a legislative package, which will be presented to the Wyoming Congressional delegation.

Steve Smutko then introduced the next agenda item, which entailed a report on the interviews the Ruckelshaus Institute held with the individual committee members. Mr. Smutko was encouraged that the committee members expressed confidence that the process will work and with the willingness of the committee members to work together throughout the process. Mr. Smutko stressed the importance of committee members being actively involved in the process and attending the meetings. Mr. Smutko also emphasized the importance of the interest groups being represented by each committee members and desire for some sort of consensus between those interest groups and the committee members. Mr. Smutko concluded by discussing logistics as related to the meetings and asked that the committee begin to think about how they are going to get information, where that information is going to come from and the scheduling of field tours to each of the study areas. Committee member Monte Skinner asked about committee members discussing matters between each other outside of a public meeting. Mr. Smutko answered that in the case of this committee that would be acceptable, unless the committee as a whole did not want communication between committee members outside of a public meeting. Committee member Bill Lanning asked about the Committee having access to mapping and GIS. County Planning Director Myers responded that he would have access to the County GIS available at future meetings.

Co-Chairman Smitherman called for a brief break. After the break, Travis McNiven from Senator Barrasso's staff addressed the Advisory Committee. Mr. McNiven detailed his education and background related to natural resource issues. Mr. McNiven told the committee that Wyoming's congressional delegation supports the State lead public land initiative related to wilderness study areas, including the process established by the County Commissioners Association. Mr. McNiven discussed the continuing non-decision status of wilderness study areas and the need for congressional action. Mr. McNiven continued by telling the committee that the process developed as part of the statewide public

land initiative is the best means to address the status of the study areas and get congress to take action, because it is a transparent and public process happening at the local level. Mr. McNiven let the committee know that he is available to attend site visits or meetings as necessary and to assist in providing requested information to the committee. Mr. McNiven reviewed the process of recommendations developed by the committee making it into legislation to be presented to Congress and that the committee will be provided the opportunity to review whatever draft legislation is developed. Mr. McNiven concluded by outlining his directive from the State congressional delegation, which is to inform the committee(s) that there are recommendations which are deal killers, that would preclude the support of the congressional delegation. Mr. McNiven will inform the committee(s) of issues the delegation has with the recommendation. Mr. McNiven reminded the committee that their recommendation is not required to be an either or (i.e. full release or made wilderness), that middle ground is acceptable. Committee member Bill Lanning asked Mr. McNiven if this process could result in some sort of Wyoming wilderness legislation. Mr. McNiven responded that was certainly a possibility and emphasized the importance of the committee following the process established and to be transparent in order for this effort to be successful.

The next order of business was review and discussion of a charter. Mr. Smutko led the discussion and proceeded to review each chapter of the draft charter developed by the Ruckelshaus Institute. Mr. Smutko explained that the draft charter was developed at the request of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association and is to be utilized as a starting point for counties participating in the public lands initiative. Discussion of the first chapter of the charter, entitled “Background and Project Description” centered on the language, which follows the guidelines established by the Wyoming County Commissioners Association.

Discussion of the second chapter of the draft charter, entitled “Purpose” included the insertion of language providing an opportunity for the advisory committee to address any changes to the committee’s recommendation at the local, state or federal level. A decision of the inclusion of such language was deferred.

The third chapter of the charter, entitled “Products and Outcomes”, included a discussion of the language regarding an opportunity for the advisory committee to address changes to the committee’s recommendation being better suited for inclusion in this chapter of the charter. The advisory committee voted to include such language in this chapter. There was also a brief discussion regarding the County having a Planning Commission.

Discussion of the fourth chapter, entitled “Geographic Area” included recommendations to name the three study areas within Sublette County, specifying that Shoal Creek is in both Sublette and Teton counties. The committee discussed interaction with Teton County regarding Shoal Creek and added language to the charter clarifying that the Sublette County Advisory Committee is not obligated to develop a joint recommendation with Teton County regarding Shoal Creek.

The next chapter of the draft charter reviewed is entitled “Advisory Committee Membership and Representation”. Mr. Smutko began the discussion by examining how the committee would receive information from the public, stating that there is nothing in the draft charter regarding responsibilities of the committee regarding receiving information from the public. How the committee members could involve and communicate with the constituent groups they represent was discussed. The committee instructed Planning Director Myers to explore an email address for the committee, enabling public

communication through a single email rather than separate emails for each committee member. Committee member Lanning discussed the potential for additional representation, specifically a member for the timber industry and non-sporting/non-consumptive recreational users. The committee decided that non-sporting/non-consumptive recreational users were represented with the current composition of the committee. With respect to a representative from the timber industry, the committee decided that if advice or information regarding the timber industry would be useful in formulating recommendations the committee could seek advice from an expert in the field. New member appointments was next discussed, including an addition to the charter addressing new member appointments will be made by the Board of County Commissioners. Alternate membership was the next topic of discussion. Discussion included the potential need for alternates to attend every meeting in order to be informed enough to participate should the alternate need to fill in for a committee member. The committee members discussed this being a huge time commitment for alternates and that perhaps the decision on alternates should be left up to each individual committee member. As part of the discussion on alternate members, the committee considered a set schedule for committee meetings and the ability to participate via conference call. The committee decided that if there is a set schedule, the committee members should have no problem attending meetings, making the need for alternate members un-necessary. The committee decided to remove the section regarding alternate members from the charter. The committee discussed voluntary withdraw of committee members, with the decision of who would replace a member choosing to withdraw being up to the Board of County Commissioners. The final discussion items regarding advisory committee membership and representation addressed the role of the co-chairs. Mr. Smutko will meet with the co-chairs regarding this item and will report back to the committee at a future meeting.

Discussion regarding the sixth chapter of the charter, entitled “Responsibilities of the Advisory Committee”, began with the committee developing the draft charter. Minutes were part of this discussion, with the committee deciding that County Planning Director Myers would be responsible for the minutes and would provide a draft of the minutes to the committee within two weeks of meeting date(s). The committee also decided that minutes could be approved by email, rather than waiting until the next scheduled meeting. Keeping constituents informed was next discussed. The committee decided that town hall meetings would be helpful, along with evening workshops. The committee believed that both of these ideas would allow for greater public involvement and for information dissemination to the public. The committee also discussed field trips being open to the public and the need to advertise field trips. The committee decided that a town hall meeting in the vicinity of a field trip, held on the same day as the field trip would be useful. County Planning Director Myers was tasked with arranging facilities for town hall meeting should the committee proceed with town hall meeting(s).

The committee discussion of the charter moved to the next chapter, entitled “Responsibilities of the Facilitators”. The committee decided that keeping the Ruckelshaus Institute onboard was a good idea. The committee also assigned meeting logistics and attendance records to County Planning Director Myers.

The committee moved on to discuss the next chapter contained in the charter, entitled “Decision Process”. Mr. Smutko gave an overview of what it means to operate by consensus and explained the concept of using a six-point scale in making decisions. There was also discussion of a process for committee members to voice their dissention.

The committee decided to adhere to the agenda and move on to the public comment portion of the meeting. Review and completion of the charter will be tabled until the next meeting. Co-chairman Smitherman asked for public comment. Rollin Sparrowe stated that he is a strong advocate for wilderness areas and protected land. Mr. Sparrowe recognized the difficult task facing the committee involving multiple use of public lands. Jessi Johnson of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation stated that her organization is invested in and supports the state's public lands initiative. Ms. Johnson thanked the committee for a well-run meeting and offered that there are good voices at the table representing the membership categories. Next to offer public comment was Stephanie Kessler of the Wyoming Outdoor Council. Ms. Kessler commended the committee members for serving and stated that the process in Sublette County was off to a great start, given the discussions from today's meeting and efforts to reach out to the public. Ms. Kessler continued by supporting the idea of town hall type meetings and added her organization and the Wyoming Wildlife Federation would be meeting for lunch at the Brew Pub to inform interested members of the public on the process and outcome of today's meeting. Ms. Kessler invited advisory committee members to attend. In conclusion, Ms. Kessler mentioned that she had been contacted by backcountry horsemen regarding their concerns. Committee member Skinner responded that he has been in contact with the backcountry horsemen and would relay the groups concerns to the committee. Dave Hohl concluded the public comment portion of the meeting by expressing the idea of differing values making the job of the committee difficult and that everyone is not going to get what they want. Mr. Hohl continued by stating his belief that even wilderness areas are multiple use, based on the suitability of the land, and that decisions regarding wilderness areas should be based on the highest value. Mr. Hohl concluded by reminding the committee that the wilderness study areas in Sublette County do not stand alone and that citizen input and involvement are important. Mr. Hohl expressed his disappointment that tourism is not represented on the advisory committee.

With no additional public comment, the committee discussed the schedule for the next meeting, which will be September 7 from 1 – 5 pm in the Commissioners Meeting Room at the County Courthouse. The committee decided that all future meeting would be the first Wednesday of the month from 1 – 5 pm. The committee also discussed holding the first field trip to one of the study areas in October, perhaps in lieu of a regularly scheduled meeting. A tentative agenda was discussed for the September meeting, with old business to be the first agenda item. Other agenda items to be included were completion of the charter review (to include a discussion of sub-committees), scheduling a field trip for October, possible speakers to invite on the October field trip and data availability/needs/sources.

With no further business, the August 22, 2016 Advisory Committee meeting was adjourned at 12:03 pm.