

Fremont County WPLI Advisory Committee Site Visit

July 14, 2016 | 1:00 p.m. | Copper Mountain

Meeting called by	Douglas L. Thompson, WPLI Commissioner /Coordinator	Advisory Committee Attendees: Reg Phillips, Julia Stuble, Nick Dobric, Rick Mickelson, Josh Milek, Andy Blair, Ginger Bennett, Gary Horton and Travis Becker
Type of meeting	Site Tour	
Note taker	Becky Enos	Other Attendees: Travis McNiven, Sara Rose Tannenbaum, Jared Oakleaf, Kim Wilbert, Peter Dvorak, Dick Inberg, Mark Keiser, Patricia Keiser, Daniel Bendtsen, Chesie Lee, Jeanne Frank, Judy Pedersen, Peter Simer, Cyndy Simer, Dick Loper, Gail Loper, Albert Herbst, Lois Herbst and Greg Anderson.

AGENDA TOPICS

Welcome | Commissioner Thompson

Doug thanked the group for their attendance for the site visit to Copper Mountain, which is a historic day, as Fremont County takes the lead to be the first County to do a site visit as part of the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative to review WSAs within their respective counties. The group initially met at the Shoshoni Town Hall at 1:00 p.m. and carpoled to Birds Eye Pass Road.

BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner Jared Oakleaf answered questions at the first tour stop at the gravel pit where he noted the gravel pit is excluded from the WSA. When this area was first set aside as a WSA in 1991, the major rationale was its capacity for solitude, the ability to look down on Boysen Lake, as well as being a primitive area in the 5,000 acres of roadless area in the WSA. The area is managed similar to wilderness, but BLM did not recommend it be classified as wilderness because it is not outstanding for recreational use. There are two grazing permits, one is a horse permit to the north and a livestock grazing permit (800 AUM's), there is not much grazing on the north side. There is one undeveloped spring. Exclusions include a dry gas well on the south end that is capped and he did not think there was an active permitting on the gravel pit. The Resource Management Plan reference to this area will be provided by Doug. The BLM gets requests for recreational infrastructure, but they have to decline as they are not allowed to do so as they would be declared a permanent installation. They also have to deny permits for group treks. Mountain bikes are allowed in most of the WSA's, but would not be allowed if it was designated as wilderness. There cannot be a preferred alternative when it comes to the WSAs. Weed species in the area were discussed (cheat grass, larkspur).

Game and Fish Biologist Greg Anderson stated there is low deer and elk density in the area. There is some sheep on the peripheral area. Critical habitats include on the north side crucial mule deer habitat and mule deer and antelope on the south side. There is not critical habitat for sheep or elk. Chukar hunting is good in the area. The old mines and caves are habitat for bats. Reg commented there are no listed bats in Wyoming. Doug stated this is mainly winter game use for most species other than antelope who use it year round. The east side has higher wildlife density. The mule deer numbers collapsed 25 years ago.

Albert Herbst (raised in the area) stated mountain lions are thick. Birds Eye Pass Road goes up to the Birds Eye Station, once the road hits Hot Springs County, it is no longer a County road, that permission is needed to use it from the County line into Thermopolis.

Congress ordered BLM to research possible new wilderness lands in 1976 and WSAs were classified until the BLM made a recommendation to Congress of which lands should be protected. In 1991, those the agency did agree to set aside WSAs and gave their recommendation of yes or no on whether to designate as wilderness. Interim management is being done as a WSA in case the end result is wilderness. If the area is released, without management direction, the BLM would manage the area according to the current Lander Resource Management Plan. There are no BLM wilderness designations in Fremont County.

Doug Thompson: Wyoming Public Lands Bill addresses WSA status. The Advisory Committee will review recommendations and listen to their constituents. Within two years, a recommendation will be submitted to the State. Various groups of people want different things, there is a wide range of categories to research. The Committee has the ability to recommend criteria for use. They will review the RMP which can be part of our recommendation.

Lois Herbst (landowner and permittee): This is the location of the old stage road. Butch Cassidy had squatters rights at the Quen Sabe Ranch. Mrs. Crowley ran the stage stop at the area that now belongs to the Humphrey's. In the early 1900's there was no road through the Wind River Canyon, the railroad was laid in 1913. At that time, there was no sheriff in Thermopolis, which at that time was part of Fremont County. There is a trail above thru Herbst private land.

Reg Phillips: According to John Herbst, there are some ATV trespass issues up here.

There has not been a thorough inventory done in this area regarding cultural issues.

Dick Inberg: Referenced a 1991 Citizens Report. Julia will provide a copy of the report to the Committee for review.

Julie Stuble: Reviewed reasons why people recreate in the area: hiking, highway accessible, solitude, fun and unique place, winter bird population.

The Advisory Committee acknowledged there was not tribal representation present, and stated they had provided the invitation.

The majority of the group hiked to the top of the hill that overlooks Boysen Lake.

Doug stated there are several ways for the public to express their comments (written, electronic). All the e-mail addresses received from previous meetings will be sent a link to access the on-line google form developed by Josh. The Advisory Committee had an informal vote at the parking lot at the Shoshoni Town Hall and agreed to have Josh build a website specifically for WPLI. Fremont County WPLI, the County website and the State WCCA website will all be linked.

The tour members left the gravel pit area and toured on up Birds Eye Pass Road. Just before Birds Eye Pass, Todd Humphries gave an in-depth discussion of ranching family history and activities in the area.

Adjourned | Commissioner Thompson

The tour concluded back at Shoshoni Town Hall at 5:00 p.m.