

**Wyoming Public Lands Initiative (WPLI) Fortification Creek
Advisory Committee Meeting
April 10, 2017**

Present: Commissioner Rusty Bell , Campbell County; Commissioner Bill Novotny, Johnson County; Commissioner Micky Shober, Campbell County; Commissioner Matt Avery, Campbell County; Commissioner Robert Perry, Johnson County; Dave Clarendon, Conservation; James Hansen, Energy; Barry Hayden, AG/Ranching; Jay Quintanilla (for Deb Hepp), Conservation; Wallace Leastman, General Public; Carrie Little, AG/Ranching; Jeremy Murphy, Sportsman; John Tinnell, Energy; Bryna Long, General Public; Levi Jensen, Recreation; Karlon Knudson, AG/Ranching;

BLM: Tom Bills, Stephanie Collium, District Manager for the High Points District; Chris Darnell, Greg Middleton

Public: David A. Bacca, Heidi Davidson, Don Crecelius, Rob Davidson, Jill Morrison, Julia Stuble, Jenny Williams, Molly Clark, Rick Pallister

Minutes

Two members moved and seconded to approve the March 13, 2017 minutes. Motion Carried.

Agenda

Ms. Long moved to approve the April 10, 2017 Agenda and Mr. Murphy seconded. Motion Carried.

GIS Data:

Fortification Creek meets the Wilderness Study Area (WSA) designation. The Advisory Committee can recommend to Congress to make this area a true wilderness area. This means natural ecological processes should be allowed to operate freely, no mechanical vehicles are allowed in a wilderness area. The Advisory Committee can grandfather items in a wilderness area, for instance airstrips, fire towers and grazing.

Congressional Designations:

- A Cooperative Management Protection Area is located in the state of Oregon, Steens Mountain, is very similar to the Fortification Creek area. Steens Mountain is a mixture of BLM and private lands. This is a federal and private partnership. There are cultural, economic, ecological and social values that they are trying to manage in the area cooperatively. This area was created by Congress.
- Outstanding Natural Areas are to protect unique scientific, scenic educational and recreational values. There are three (3) of them, a lighthouse in each of the states of Oregon, Florida and Washington.
- Natural Conservation Area can conserve, manage and enhance a variety of different resources; including natural values, recreational values, cultural, wildlife, aquatic, archeological and paleontological. Anything that is worthy of managing and conserving and would require congressional level action. If the Advisory Committee goes this route it would be difficult to undo the action. BLM designations, which are covered by a Resource Management Plan (RMP),

can be revised. Something with a BLM designation can have an active lifespan of 20 years and be reviewed every 20 years. Congressional action would be close to permanent. Fortification Creek will be managed by BLM unless you put in your recommendation for another agency to manage it.

Fortification does not meet the criteria for designation as a National Monument, Forest Reserve, Wild & Scenic River, or National Historic Trail.

BLM Designations:

- Lands with wilderness characteristics: These do not follow the Wilderness Act. The intent is to preserve eco system health, natural values, and primitive recreation opportunities. There is flexibility in the management. The characteristics need to be protected but the management does not have to be as rigid as a true Wilderness. For example you can say no to motorized vehicles but mechanized vehicles, like mountain bikes, can be considered. BLM designated one in the Resource Management Plan (RMP) on the face of the Big Horns, south of town. This area is closed to motorized use but not mechanized. It is managed as a Class 2 visual resource, which means you can have some disruption but it cannot overpower the natural scenic values of the area. Class 1 means you cannot do anything that would harm that scenic quality. BLM is allowing fluid mineral development in this area with a no surface occupancy which means you cannot put a well physically on the land but you can place a well adjacent to it, just outside this area and horizontally drill to recover the minerals.
- Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): This is another BLM administrative designation. BLM is looking to protect and manage relevant and important resource values; historic values, cultural, scenic, fish and wildlife values, other natural processes, human and life safety from natural hazards. Fortification Creek was nominated as an ACEC back in 2001 when they were doing the Powder River Basin oil and gas project and it met the relevant and important values however we deferred a decision with the Powder River Basin project until a later date. BLM felt that the management for the Powder River Basin project was sufficient to protect the relevant important values which are the elk herd and fragile watershed. When BLM put the management plan for the Fortification Creek area together and it was signed in 2011, they evaluated it again and agreed that it met the criteria but a decision was made not to go with an ACEC because the management plan protected the elk herd and steep slopes. BLM recently updated their RMP. When they were working on it they looked at a potential ACEC for Fortification Creek area again. The two (2) times prior it was strictly the WSA and the public lands adjacent to the WSA. Mr. Bills stated that the ACEC is separate from the WSA. The WSA has its management and it is very strict. The ACEC branched out and took the land immediately adjacent. Oil and gas development was allowed but BLM described how oil and gas development was to be done so that the elk herd and soils could be preserved. An ACEC needs more management than BLM land in general. The requirement for ACEC is that it needs more management beyond what the general management plan provides. When BLM revisited this in the RMP they expanded the areas and looked at the elk crucial seasonal ranges; the crucial winter range and the calving area. They came to the conclusion that the Fortification Creek area did not need additional management. In the BLM office they have two areas of critical environmental concerns, Pumpkin Buttes, southwestern Campbell County and Welch Ranch, Sheridan County. Pumpkin Buttes came from cultural resources; vision quest sites and Native

American artifacts. Welch Ranch, along the Tongue River, has a burning coal seam which is a health and safety concern.

- Special Recreation Area: These areas are managed for recreation. BLM has seven (7) different areas that they manage which involve non-motorize recreation, motorize recreation, paleontological and cultural issues.

Mr. Clarendon reviewed: Congressional designations include Wilderness, Cooperative Management Protection, Outstanding Natural Areas, Natural Conservation Area and National Monuments. BLM designations include the lands with wilderness characteristics, ACEC, and special recreation area. If the group gives Fortification Creek a congressional designation that is permanent, if the group gives it a BLM designation that is administrative.

The BLM's presentation shows examples of management that have been applied. This doesn't control any decision from the Advisory Committee. The BLM's presentation was laid out as potential examples to be blended or disregarded. There was a discussion on keeping Fortification Creek a WSA. The purpose of forming this committee was to give it a designation. The process needs to continue so a bill will be ready to be introduced in two years.

The BLM presentation continued showing maps and resources in the Fortification Creek area. If the Advisory Committee wanted to open it up, oil and gas, sand and gravel, and wind energy could be important resources in the area. The Advisory Committee discussed the BLM mapping of the Fortification Creek area.

The Agenda for the next meeting:

Review of Lander 2

Review of the Charter

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Wildlife Natural Resources Trust Fund

Public Comments:

Julia Stubble, Wyoming Outdoor Council and Rick Pallister, Nature Conservancy made comments about consensus.

Committee Comments:

Bryna Long said that during a discussion on consensus at Lander 2 it was suggested to have everyone write down what they want and figure out how to meet those needs. She also suggested making a list of what everyone wants.

Chairwoman Little said that at the next meeting she wants to lay out an actual timeline of when certain items will be accomplished. The focus is to get a decision completed by spring of 2018.

Before the next meeting the committee needs to consider the Charter, super majority versus consensus, and a list of what each committee member wants.

The next meeting will be Monday, May 8, 2017 at 6 p.m. at the Campbell County Courthouse.

Dave Clarendon moved and Barry Hayden seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. Motion Carried.

A recording of the meeting is available.