

Park County WPLI Advisory Committee | MINUTES

May 17, 2017 | 6:00 – 8:15 pm | Park County Library – Grizzly Hall

Meeting called by	Bucky Hall, WPLI Committee Chair	Attendees: Bucky Hall, Lee Livingston, JD Radakovich, Chris Pfister, Jenny DeSarro, John McGee, Bob Jackson, Christine Bekes, Karinthia Harrison, Rick Harrison, Phyllis Preator, Doug Smith, Hap Ridgway, Dustin Rosencranse, Greg Mayton, John Gallagher, Rori Renner, Joe Kondelis; Facilitator Tara Kuipers, Committee Secretary Shaunna Romero
Type of meeting	Advisory Committee	
Facilitator	Tara Kuipers	

NEXT MEETING

Th. June 15 – 5:30 p.m.
Grizzly Hall (Cody Library)

Other Attendees: Matt Hall, City of Cody Mayor; Paul Spitler, Director, The Wilderness Society; Lisa McGee, Wyoming Outdoor Council; Erik Molvar, Western Watersheds Project; Bert Miller; Sean Leach, Back County Horsemen/Back Country Hunters & Anglers; Delissa Minnick, BLM Cody Field Office Manager; Barry Reiswig, Wyoming Backcountry Hunters & Anglers; Linda Reynolds; Shaleas Harrison, Wyoming Wilderness Association; Bill Burnett, Wyoming Outdoor Council; Dewey Vanderhoff

Absent: Michael Hirsch, Wes Allen

AGENDA TOPICS

Approval of Minutes |

The April 19 WPLI Committee meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented to the committee via email.

Public Comment 1

Shaleas Harrison, an employee of Wyoming Wilderness Association (WWA), presented a handout: PEW Charitable Trust 2016 “The Economic Value of Quiet Recreation on BLM Lands,” and related her personal value for quiet recreation and wilderness opportunities in the McCullough Peaks.

Discussion: McCullough Peaks WSA Interests & Options Worksheet

Facilitator Tara Kuipers noted that:

1. The first of the Interactions & Ground Rules in the Park County WPLI Committee Charter is respect for each other, the committee members, and the process.
2. Wyoming County Commissioners Association (WCCA) has all Wilderness Study Area (WSA) maps and committee documents on its web site.

Kuipers sent a McCullough Peaks WSA Interest & Options Worksheet (attached) to query each committee member on their individual values for the WSA to identify common / viable options. Kuipers said she condensed committee

members' responses into one document (also attached). This document was sent out to the committee a week ago for review. Kuipers said the comments repeated most on the worksheets were:

1. Maintain current uses, with no additional uses added
2. Designate the WSA as multiple use, allowing both mechanized and non-mechanized access, grazing, horseback riding, hiking
3. The importance of open space and solitude
4. Maintaining the unique Wyoming landscape
5. Conservation of flora and fauna
6. Maintaining natural landscapes and viewsapes
7. Importance of clean water & wetlands
8. Maintaining public access
9. Management based on scientific evidence

Kuipers called for the committee to reflect on these responses and discuss standouts or surprises. Discussion followed. Committee members debated the viability of expanding the WSA boundary by considering land outside of the WSA in the group's management recommendation. Some members noted that the WCCA's WPLI Principles and Guidelines specifically suggest more broad consideration of lands outside of the WSAs, and feel this would allow inclusion of more constituents' interests. Kuipers reminded the group that the WCCA WPLI Principles and Guidelines document, as well as the sample Charter, was to be expanded or limited at the discretion of each county's leadership. The Park County Commissioners limited the scope to the WSAs only.

Anecdotal comments from a committee member related to BLM Special Use Permits (SUP) and Special Recreation Permits (SRP) followed. Delissa Minnick, BLM Cody Field Office Manager, stated that the BLM does not have a position on the County's WPLI recommendation. Minnick also noted that the BLM does not restrict SUPs and SRPs, and that the authority to make decisions around these applications is designated to her alone.

Commission Chairman Lee Livingston reminded the group that the County Commission chose to look only at the Park County lands designated as WSAs and to form the WPLI committee. The Commission will consider the committee's recommendation and, if approved, will then submit the recommendation to the WCCA for legislation. Livingston affirmed that a recommendation from the committee containing expanded boundaries will greatly increase the potential for the Board to reject the recommendation. Livingston said the process to consider expanding boundaries is during Federal Resource Management Plan (RMP) process.

WPLI Committee Chair Bucky Hall further explained that all land management in Park County outside of the WSAs have been reviewed over the past 10 years in the RMP processes. The Park County Commission participated in the 2004 RMP and 2007 BLM Management Plan, and the final RMP plans are still fairly new.

Committee members expressed a desire to move forward with a decision. Another member said their obligation to go back to their constituents for direction after each meeting is due diligence in the process; another said the options for protective management are not clear to him.

Chairman Hall noted that two or three meetings ago, the committee had lengthy discussion on the McCullough Peaks WSA and came to reasonable agreement on their desired management recommendation. This agreement was to maintain the original WSA approximate 8,000 acres, and to add an additional approximate 2,000 acres to include Division Ridge (Division Ridge is within the WSA boundary). The recommendation would specify no new roads, no off-road travel, and width restriction on existing roads. No discussion related to mechanized versus non-mechanized travel or horseback access occurred at that time.

Kuipers provided review of the 24,000-acre and 8,000-acre boundaries on a map of the WSA and asked the committee members for comment. Proposed was exchange of the state land parcel that lies within the WSA.

Minnick addressed the plausibility of exchange of this parcel, and explained that the State would probably not oppose exchange with a higher mineral value piece. Minnick said a process/procedure exists but that it is long and difficult because of the necessity of finding parcels of like value and reaching willingness between partners. Committee members commented that maintaining one cohesive piece would be advantageous in developing a recommendation.

Roads and options for management recommendation were discussed. The importance of the recommendations including a full suite of options to allow the BLM continued ability to manage the resources, including fire-fighting, was noted. Roads to facilitate this and management of grazers' resources is needed.

Kuipers provided a review of the WSA's existing uses. Companion designations (National Conservation or National Recreation Areas) that allow unique use management were discussed. Also noted was that the definitive Wilderness designations are either full release or hard release.

Public Comment 2

Erik Molvar, Western Watersheds Project Executive Director and author of Wild Wyoming (a Falcon Guide), asked the committee to consider interests of all people, including those who live outside of Wyoming. Molvar, asking the committee to "do something that makes sense," said legitimacy issues are central to the WPLI. He asserted that the McCullough Peaks are part of the Heart of the West Conservation Plan. Molvar said he wants the entire Peaks area to be Wilderness, and will consider any reduction of current land a "net loss to Wilderness." Molvar commented that counties are not land managers.

Public Comment 3

Barry Reiswig, a South Fork resident representing Wyoming Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, said, "wilderness is not pristine, it is what Congress says it is." He expressed his feeling that counties, while vital in everyday lives of residents to manage roads, gravel, culverts, bridges, counties are not land managers. Reiswig said Park County residents should applaud themselves in the way the county looks. Reiswig continued, referencing the methods by which WSA designation might be removed as per the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) Section 202 and 206.

Closing

Kuipers summarized the committees' needs and outcomes from the meeting:

- Boundary options
- 8,020-acre option + Division Ridge addition
- Entire 20,000-acre option
- Use questions

Chairman Hall directed the committee to come prepared to make a decision.

The library closing dictated that no additional public comment could be heard. The meeting was adjourned.

Actions

Karinthia Harrison will:

- Photograph and inventory all existing roads within the WSA

- Identify current management of existing roads and reclamation roads
- Identify current management of motorized use

This information will be used to:

- Identify dead end roads within the WSA
- Overlay roads on a topographic WSA map
- Determine current management of access
- Identify loop potential

Resources / Handouts

Attached to these minutes, and uploaded to the WCCA WPLI and Park County WPLI web sites:

- PEW Charitable Trusts – The Economic Value of Quiet Recreation on BLM Lands (Shaleas Harrison, representing Wyoming Wilderness Association)
- McCullough Peaks WSA Interest & Options Worksheet summary of responses



The Economic Value of Quiet Recreation on BLM Lands

The Bureau of Land Management oversees 246 million acres of public land across 11 western states and Alaska. In 2014, there were more than 60 million visits to these lands, nearly two-thirds of which were by people enjoying quiet (nonmotorized) recreation activities, like camping, hunting, hiking, and fishing. These visitors spent some \$1.8 billion in communities within 50 miles of recreation areas, supported nearly 25,000 jobs, and generated \$2.8 billion for the overall U.S. economy.

Wyoming

In Wyoming alone, there were **1.9 million visits** to the state's **18.4 million acres** of BLM lands in 2014 to enjoy nonmotorized outdoor activities.



\$112 million

in overall spending impact—the value of goods and services produced, the broadest measure of economic activity.



\$102 million

in total direct spending on quiet recreation visits within 50 miles of recreation sites.



\$28 million

generated in personal income to people specifically tied to quiet recreation on BLM lands, including wages, salaries, and benefits.



1,074 jobs

supported locally as a result of quiet recreation visits to BLM land.

**Public Lands
Managed by the
Bureau of Land
Management**



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For further information, please visit:
pewtrusts.org

Contact: Susan Whitmore, director, communications
Email: swhitmore@pewtrusts.org
Project website: pewtrusts.org

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COMPILED

INTEREST – OPTIONS WORKSHEET

McCullough Peaks WSA

Underlying Interests: WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?	Possible Options: If achieved, WHAT OPTIONS COULD SATISFY THE MOST INTERESTS POSSIBLE?
<i>The Peaks are just fine the way they are; current uses should be maintained</i>	If anybody wants to go there, let them knock themselves out, just don't add roads or structures
<i>Preserving public access and multi-use while still protecting the environment: motorized, non-motorized including hiking, biking, pet accessibility, horseback riding</i>	Termination of the Wilderness Study Area and long-term management priorities recognized by the BLM that protects said multi-use
<i>Agricultural rights, i.e. grazing, is maintained</i>	Termination of the Wilderness Study Area and long-term management priorities recognized by the BLM that protects said multi-use
<i>Open space</i>	Keep current uses, no further development
<i>Recreation (ALL types, motorized & non-motorized, foot, horse/etc.)</i>	Keep current uses, no further development
<i>Preserving the character of the area</i>	Keep current uses, no further development
<i>Ensure multiple use is continued</i>	Maintain the current levels of multiple use & practices that are currently allowed within the WSA's. Maintain current areas of motorized use, and not asking to do anything that is not currently allowed. This should satisfy other stakeholders.
<i>Bicycle use has existed in the area for many years.</i>	Maintain non-motorized mechanized use of existing routes and trails.
<i>We should protect and manage it essentially in the state it is currently in with current uses.</i>	Maintain management strategies similar to what is currently taking place.
<i>Natural habitat for mammals, birds & reptiles that use the area</i>	Wilderness Designation or highest BLM protection

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INTEREST – OPTIONS WORKSHEET

McCullough Peaks WSA

<i>Protect characteristic Wy landscape</i>	Wilderness Designation or highest BLM protection
<i>Basically roadless & should remain so</i>	Wilderness Designation or highest BLM protection
<i>Protect area for potential Wild horse use</i>	Wilderness Designation or highest BLM protection
<i>Having opportunities for solitude and to connect to natural and wild soundscapes and viewscapes without having to trek eight miles into Wilderness. An intrinsic value exists in maintaining untamed places.</i>	<p>Maintaining existing uses while prohibiting future uses that would degrade the areas presently existing character; and manage the area to maintain its important ecological, recreational, and cultural values.</p> <p>Trade ownership of State Parcel with BLM for unified management. Manage significant acreage as Roadless and eliminating existing motorized use within that area. Ensuring a permanent mineral withdrawal for the area. Preserve the existing visual character.</p>
<i>Having wild native landscape that is connected in a way that wildlife moves freely and unimpeded; and in a way, that offers a variety of habitats for different kinds of wild native animals and plants to thrive over a space from high alpine to lower bighorn basin badlands.</i>	<p>Three backcountry roadless areas elsewhere in Park County and on the Shoshone National Forest have recognized high wilderness characteristics; provide significant wildlife habitat for numerous species; contain water storing capacity and drainages that feed the Shoshone, Greybull and Wood Rivers; are connected to larger intact wild native habitats; offer vast viewscapes, natural soundscapes and solitude: Trout Creek, Franc’s Peak, and Wood River. Legislative protection for these three areas would meet conservation interests that status quo management for High Lakes and McCullough Peaks does not.</p> <p>Another option that addresses many of our conservation interests with respect to wildlife would be safeguards for big game migration corridors and other key habitats. Recent elk migration research by Arthur Middleton was featured in 2016 on exhibit at the Center of the West and within National Geographic “Yellowstone” issue. The research shows two significant elk herds in Park County, the Clarks Fork Herd and the Cody Herd, that embark on migrations. Both herds mostly summer</p>

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INTEREST – OPTIONS WORKSHEET

McCullough Peaks WSA

	<p>within wilderness on the national forest and with the boundary of Yellowstone National Park, however, front country lowland wintering and parturition/calving areas could benefit from added or legislative protections. Fragmentation from things like unfriendly fencing, mixed state and BLM lands with differing management missions, and even varying tolerance levels of private land owners can put the permeability of these corridors at risk. Middleton’s data compilation came to light after the completion of the Forest and BLM land and resource management plans. The Wyoming Migration Initiative is currently undergoing a variety of research projects to understand more about ungulate migrations around the state, including these elk herds in Park County. Opportunities may be found by looking at new research and planning with foresight. Are there valuable safeguards that could be legislated to ensure the health and vitality of wintering and/or calving/parturition areas? Are there some private and voluntary arrangements to encourage and compensate private land owners who are currently providing wildlife habitat and forage on their land? Are there deer or pronghorn herds that could benefit from similar safeguards?</p>
<p><i>Having clean cold water and enough of that water throughout the year. Healthy wetland habitats in all their forms – rivers, ponds, fen, etc. are critical.</i></p>	<p>Three backcountry roadless areas elsewhere in Park County and on the Shoshone National Forest have recognized high wilderness characteristics; provide significant wildlife habitat for numerous species; contain water storing capacity and drainages that feed the Shoshone, Greybull and Wood Rivers; are connected to larger intact wild native habitats; offer vast viewscapes, natural soundscapes and solitude: Trout Creek, Franc’s Peak, and Wood River. Legislative protection for these three areas would meet conservation interests that status quo management for High Lakes and McCullough Peaks does not.</p>
<p><i>Scientific evidence and technical expertise; Multiple Use (vs. Wilderness Use); and Fire Abatement</i></p>	<p>Simple or Modified Multiple Use Options; Working toward a collaborative resolution, in earnest, with a commitment to the process to compromise, not to “win”; Any options other than "let it burn..."</p>
<p><i>Serenity & wildlife habitat; and protecting Wyoming’s high desert</i></p>	<p>An option that allows for (a) grazing,</p>

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INTEREST – OPTIONS WORKSHEET

McCullough Peaks WSA

<i>plateau</i>	(b) recreation (motorized and non); (c) hunting, scenic tours, etc. and (d) potential for mineral development
<i>Accessibility - we should not limit access in McCullough Peaks</i>	Multiple use - make McCullough Peaks a GOLD STANDARD for multiple uses!