

Fremont County WPLI Advisory Committee Minutes

FINAL

November 28, 2016 | 6:00 p.m. | Fremont County Commissioners Chambers

Meeting called by	Douglas L. Thompson, FCPLI Chairman	Advisory Committee: Travis Becker, Reg Phillips, Gary Horton, Rick Mickelsen, Ginger Bennett, Josh Milek, Andy Blair. Nick Dobric and Julia Stuble attended via speakerphone.
Type of meeting	Regular	Public: Bill Bartlett, Kim Wilbert, Robert Coe, David Lloyd
Note taker	Becky Enos	Agency: Jared Oakleaf (BLM), Jessi Johnson (Wyoming Wildlife Federation)

AGENDA TOPICS

Welcome | Chairman Doug Thompson

Doug welcomed everyone to the meeting and had Advisory Committee members and members of the public introduced themselves.

Approval of Agenda | Chairman Doug Thompson

Reg moved, Rick seconded, to approve the Agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes | Chairman Doug Thompson

Travis moved, Andy seconded, to approve the minutes of the Regular Advisory Committee meeting held on October 24, 2016. Motion carried unanimously. Reg moved, Travis seconded, to approve the minutes of the Site Visit of October 29, 2016, as amended. Motion carried unanimously. A correction was made to change wording to "Ross Lake Jeep Trail" and not "Bass Lake". Doug appended the Whiskey Mountain Cooperative Agreement to the minutes.

Economic Study on Hunting and Fishing | Jessi Johnson, Wyoming Wildlife Federation

Jessi distributed folders to each member for their information. The Wyoming Wildlife Federation commissioned a UW Study for Fremont County that shows sportsmen inject millions into the economy and shows dollars spent in the county by hunters and anglers, of which Fremont County totaled \$22.5 million dollars in 2015. The study was done by Tex Taylor, UW Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics who used data from the Wyoming Game and Fish and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He broke up the hunt areas, very specific, and has not been done for Wyoming before. Hunters have spent 12.3 million and anglers \$10.2 million. There were nearly 18,000 fishing licenses sold in Fremont County. Jessi stated they are hoping this data is used by the committee to give a nod that hunting and angling is absolutely huge even though it is not necessarily always looked at as an economic driver. Park County had a like study done and their total of hunting and angling was \$24.3 million. The Wyoming Wildlife Federation is having a report prepared for each county that comes on line with the WPLI. She provided the Committee with the 15 page report with in depth data to review. She also included the News

Release that will be distributed in the morning, but she wanted the Committee to be the first ones to see the information. Questions from the Committee members followed. Doug asked what components were used to come up with the value, hunting licenses were mentioned, Jessi responded that both hunting and fishing licenses are taken into account, resident and non-resident. Then they came up with dollars spent and days spent in the field for the year 2015 for county specific borders. Tex Taylor is extremely well known for these types of studies. Doug asked if she knew if motels, gasoline, restaurants, etc. were included in the data. Absolutely, all these went into those figures. Doug mentioned that Tex has done a similar study for grazing in Fremont County so he knows the methodology he uses. Jessi stated she felt he was very thorough in the report and accounted for it all. Greg asked if the numbers included the Reservation and Reservation licenses. Jessi was not sure and stated she would ask Tex, and relay the answer back to the Committee. Josh asked if she knew what the sample size was on the survey, typically it is like 1,000. Jessi stated she knows they used some of the reports from Game and Fish, he is getting more accurate numbers. Nick thanked Jessi for bringing the information to the Committee and think it is really value added that the Wyoming Wildlife Federation and UW are providing the information for the counties involved in WPLI, definitely good data. Jessi stated the entire report is also available on the Wyoming Wildlife Federation website. Ginger asked that on the mule deer hunt area, is that actually all deer or just mule deer. Jessi stated there is probably not a study done for whitetail. Doug stated part of our WSA scenario is we have other counties involved, the Rocks is partly in Natrona County, and some are towards Sweetwater County. He assumed the border of this study is the county line, Jessi affirmed that statement that the County line is the border. Doug said this would raise a second question if there is a hunt area that lapse over a county line and he used the statistics out of that hunt area, do you know how he did that? Jessi stated he took the ratio of the hunt area in the county and worked it that way. If it flipped over into another area he only used the ratio in the particular county, he made it very specific, no overlap. Doug asked the Advisory Committee members to review the material and if they have questions, e-mail them to Doug within the next week or two so he can forward to Jessi. Josh will make the information available on the County's website. Travis asked if there is a reason why Tex is going off of the calendar year 2011. He has 2015 figures for licenses, etc., why not more recent for other data. Jessi stated that may be the most recent he could get. Reg stated all the hunt surveys were 2015 season but the actual spending is a 2011 national study (dollars spent per trip) and Jessi stated he applies numbers for inflation. Travis said there may be a lot of guess work, but Jessi stated they are pretty accurate. Ginger asked if there a breakdown between the amounts of dollars spent on public lands vs. private lands. Jessi stated no but maybe could look into that data in the future. Reg stated Page 4 of the report talks about "adjusted to 2015". Doug thanked Jesse for bringing the information forward and stated any additional questions would be forwarded to her.

Senate File 56 | *Commissioner Doug Thompson*

At the last meeting, Ginger brought up the possibility of addressing this. There are two separate issues, one is the Senate File which is constitutional, and the other is the study of state management of federal lands. These issues are separate from the WPLI being discussed by this group. Doug said he would bring it back after Ginger asked about discussing it. The Committee needs to decide if this is something we want to go into for the benefit of our mission, or not. Ginger stated she went to the meeting of the Legislative Committee and after listening to them, stated they are not ready to decide where they want to go with the constitutional amendment. They do want input, there is a lot of voice against it, a little for it. And yes she agreed there are two different issues. After attending the meeting, she feels discussion by this committee is premature. We will not be able to change the minds of the legislators and certainly not change the minds of the State of Wyoming. Where they go with the constitutional amendment might be a time that we would want to provide input, but really a separate issue from WSAs. Doug affirmed Ginger is withdrawing the request at this time.

Decision Making Process (Recommendation) | *Chairman Doug Thompson*

Doug put this on the agenda for discussion. We have had our four site visits, have another one coming up, but he wanted everybody to start thinking about getting to the point of making recommendations. He has been trying to visualize how this should take place. One is that it has to be an open process and he is thinking about developing a worksheet. One of the things to be included is to look at the landscape, what is happening there now, what has happened there in the past, and probably more specifically, what we would like to recommend to occur on that landscape. So if we had worksheets to enumerate items (grazing, hunting, fishing, recreation, etc.) and the various activities we have heard that take place there (in Dubois a lot of game management activities, etc.). He is trying to envision moving forward, a worksheet would ensure when we come out of this will have a good administrative record, a traceable trail. Want to get everybody in the mindset from taking in information to processing and coming out with an outcome. Be thinking about moving into the next phase and may want to set a day to meet and work through these issues. There will be some points of contention, we have to get to an output at some time, and want to give adequate time to figure out where we are and are not in agreement and what the differences are and move towards something to put into a recommendation. Travis said the Site Evaluation Form may be something we could use as a template but Doug has ideas on developing a new one. We need to bring in those things we saw in the site visits and we can draw into them more information (like the information received today). Bring in supporting documents and think ahead. Andy suggested using the Site Visit Form as a template to begin with and then add to it. Doug said the adjoining meeting room has white out boards to write on and could move our recommendation development into there and helps to put things on the board. Andy suggested a Google platform document might be an avenue as well. Since we have this economic study, we have one on grazing too, might be thinking about economics in this whole thing. Bring it up because at the Dubois site visit, there was a community contingent that was looking at the economic benefits of utilization (heavier) of those WSAs. Think about where dollars will be spent, want to start moving into that mindset. Think about how you as an individual want to participate, what would be beneficial. If you think we need additional information, a study or something else Doug can get, let him know. Part of his job with coordinating this is providing you with all the tools you need to come up with a good recommendation. Doug would like to move to some type of matrix to rate importance in various landscapes, how important they are (grazing, hunting, etc.). Need to describe and quantify (activity essential to preserve or could get by without it). Put importance on various activities.

Site Visit – Sweetwater Rocks | *Doug Thompson*

At the Dubois Site Visit, Doug brought up what type of committee is needed, need some sort of hybrid committee to include Natrona County. We have the ability for this site to re-advertise for a whole new set up committee, or take this committee and have Natrona County supplement with members, as maybe they feel there is an activity that needs addressed. Josh has been reading about the Teton County Committee and two of their WSAs share borders with neighboring counties, they are actually going it alone and making a recommendation based on the portion that lies within their county. He thinks that since Sweetwater Rocks and Lankin Dome are almost entirely within Fremont County that may be an approach for us to consider, not confuse the whole process and not include Natrona County. Julie would like to pursue by not constraining county lines. Gary has the same train of thought as Josh, afraid to second guess what Natrona County is or is not going to do, we need to move forward with the information we have on the areas within Fremont County and give Natrona County the opportunity to make a recommendation to this Committee. Doug asked what if we as a committee look at the whole complex and propose to them to attend the site visit, set in on our meetings, but we will deal with it as a whole, and if they don't want to participate, we are still going to make a recommendation for the whole unit. Reg agrees with Gary, we have a structure and if we try to form a hybrid advisory committee, what structure are they going to have, and how are you going to appoint a committee to help us when they don't have a structure for the WPLI, he thinks we need to either stick with what is in Fremont County or do the whole thing, don't much care, but to him a hybrid advisory committee could be cumbersome with handling the logistics of putting the two together. Rick stated a unified voice for the whole area, one message and the same proposal, would be much better than any other option.

Echo Reg's comments, do the whole area and if Natrona County doesn't like it, they can provide input. Doug stated he is hearing two things – one keep our committee system intact and two, look at whole unit even though part of it is in Natrona County, like we have looked at other ones. Sweetwater Rocks is under the Lander Field Office even though part of it is in Natrona County, so it is one ACEC that includes the whole thing. Ginger stated her preference to move forward with the Lankin Dome site all by itself and then we can come up with a recommendation on the others and send to Natrona County to review prior to submission. Let them have the opportunity to comments. Andy asked for clarification of what level of involvement Natrona County is willing to commit at this point? Doug will determine that, the only thing he has is 100% positive is they want two Commissioners to be able to set in on discussion when we do the recommendation, and that is as close to a commitment he has gotten out of them. They have not pushed for a separate committee, don't think they want to do that. So he thinks our committee system and process is looked upon favorably by them so don't see them saying we are not doing it right and they take over. It is going to be how they choose to relay the information. Reg stated one of the reasons he leans towards doing all four sites is because there are some crossover, grazing and recreational use, and we will have the big picture for starters, we can still do ours and then do an addendum in our report this is our feelings on the other two units in Natrona County. Hopefully we will have a commissioner show up and can always get their comments. Doug stated Johnson County has one they share with Campbell County and the other County says whatever you want to do is fine, we may get that from Natrona County. Nick agrees with Reg to move forward with all four sites and hope commissioners and other interested stakeholders will show up. Doug stated that is administered under one ACEC under the RMP, if we chose to do Lankin Dome only, what do we tell the BLM? We want to do these different than everything else? Josh said it could maybe work the other way too, if they had a standing recommendation for one half of the complex and it gets released, would it carry over to the other parts? Travis in agreement to see it all and move forward with what we have got, to him it is one complex, whole thing combined and look at it that way and make recommendations that way, with input from Natrona if they choose. Julie agrees with Travis and Reg, look at the big picture, our recommendation not binding until final approval is given, just a recommendation. Doug is still hearing keep our committee intact, look at it as a landscape, and invite Natrona County to site visit. If after that if they want to interject themselves into the recommendation process, what they ask will be brought to this committee. Ginger asked if we are going to give the same treatment to Honeycomb Buttes and Whitehorse WSAs. Doug said the difference in his mind is that the Rocks is one ACEC spanning county lines.

Site Visit | *Commissioner Thompson*

The doodle poll showed January 14th is the best date. Weather and accessibility are two things to consider. Can always get to the rest area and see some, can probably cross some of the ranch roads from the highway. Might be hindered was doing a round the back look. Schedule it and then look at the weather a week or two before to see what it looks like. Gives us time to reschedule until spring. December meeting could provide Jared to provide BLM information and get information from the State Lands. Will be a greater landowner contingency around this particular one. Will coordinate with Natrona County and give tentative notice to landowners and give agencies a chance to gear up for their presentations.

Public Comment | *Audience*

David Lloyd may not make the site visit but wanted to relay his comments now. He is a rock climber and it is a unique environment, noting how silent it is. Never been anywhere where it can vary so much and he goes there when it is 3 mph or less winds. Wildflowers, water, etc. but decide importance on these issues, some of the best days of his life have been spent there. Put it in his guidebook. Travis asked him to put his comments on the form that is located on the website. Ways it is accessed now works well, would there be any way to make the two track across private land to be accessed and closed at landowner discretion. Don't think it needs much changing, rules there. Bolting vs. rock climbing, on wilderness areas it needs to be done by hand so limits how many bolts people

put in. If not designated Wilderness they can use a motorized drill. Climbing has been included as a historical use of Wilderness.

Jared was asked to clarify what the different scenarios entails.

Kim Wilbert suggested maybe some discussion about Natrona County input into this Sweetwater Rocks complex decision field trip would be made better by publicizing this field trip to Natrona County public, not just Commission, making sure stakeholders are informed. Do a press release in Natrona County, or asking people in interested groups are aware so have that input too. Gary will do flyers and get on the TV station or community outreach area (Rocky Mountain Sports, Casper Star, etc.). Julia will help with distribution of flyers and information. Travis said it is important to meet at one spot and not trespass on private property. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Split Rock Rest Area.

Bill Bartlett asked if the public was welcome and he was informed they are open, transparent, everybody welcome.

Next Meeting, Committee Comments and Adjournment | *Commissioner Thompson*

December meeting dates were reviewed and it was decided to move the December meeting to January 9th instead which is a week before the site visit on the 14th and then hold another regular meeting on January 23rd.

Ginger stated she felt Jessi Johnson's report was very beneficial, recognize the State of Wyoming tracks the energy impact for counties, would it be possible to get this information? Don't know if there is a way to get roadless use impact information for different areas.

Josh stated there is a State of Wyoming Motorized Recreation Economic Impact Study to share. Have some quick glance brochures and will also have the full report.

Gary stated Mr. Bartlett made a good comment because when the Dubois site tours were done, the interested public were there and they provided us with a lot of good information. If people from Natrona County show up will get their information, if they don't will be hard for us to second guess what they think. Just do as much advertising as possible.

Reg will be talking with Jared regrading grazing permittees in the area and will also visit with Dick Loper.

Julia and Nick thanked everybody for their patience in their participating over the phone.

There being no further business, Reg moved, Andy seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.