MINUTES

EMERY COUNTY PUBLIC LANDS COUNCIL

MAY 5, 2020

Due to restrictions related to COVID-19 this meeting was held electronically.
Joining the meeting was: Board members: Rod Player, Leon McElprang, Les Wilberg, Ben Grimes, Ed Geary, Wade Allinson, Laren Huntsman, Sherrell Ward, Kim McFarlane. Staff members: Ray Petersen, Commissioner Sitterud, Commissioner Wilson, Commissioner Conover, Carol Cox. Agencies: Chris Conrad (BLM), Joseph Rodarme (BLM), Troy Suwyn (MLNF). James Wells (Utah State Parks, Goblin Valley), Washington Delegation Staff: Larry Ellertson, Congressman Curtis, Clay Crozier, Senator Romney.

Welcome

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes dated March 3, 2020 was made by Ben Grimes, seconded by Kim McFarlane, and the motion passed.

Chairman Comments: Rod commented that there are a lot of planning documents going out at this time. He encouraged everyone interested in these planning documents to take the time to look them over and submit comments to Ray. He thanked the agencies for the reports that they sent in for April since we did not have a meeting in April.
Ray indicated that the RAC advisory council for the Dingel Act is moving along.

Commission Report on Emery Lands Bill: Commissioner Wilson indicated that there is nothing new to report regarding the Emery Lands Bill.

Agency Reports and Council Member Comments:
Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Chris Conrad introduced Joseph Rodarme (BLM NEPA Coordinator at the Price Field Office). Joseph reported on several NEPA projects ongoing at this time. Good Water Rim project has received a lot of support. Public comment is open until May 21st. Fossil Point, south of I-70, below Green River, is a project to develop a parking area and kiosk to promote public access to observe dinosaur fossils. They hope to sign off on this project in the next couple of weeks. Graphite Solar project is a transmission line in Wellington EA will post for public comments soon. Lila Canyon Coal Mine Lease Modification EA is posted for public comment, ends May 25th. Williams Draw lease/ buy application, no details at this time, will keep you informed. Chalk Hills Gypsum Mine, they are currently in formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, they expect to have a response sometime this summer to move forward with that pjt. Twin Bridges Helium APD(application to drill) a helium well. They are currently scheduling an internal site visit so they can continue to move forward with the project and prepare the EA. Chris Conrad reported on an AML (abandoned mine) Project in the BuckMaster Draw Exit 141 going north on I-70. They propose to close approximately 50 mine shafts. It is all in the Morrison Formation. The bedrock is very friable. These mine sites are not safe. They will retain the historic look by recessing the closures 10 feet in depending on the

condition of the mine site. These projects will be done in the fall. Ray indicated that Emery County will be consistent in asking that any closures and or structures retain their historical value as much as possible. Ben Grimes asked if any of these sites are accessible by ATV? Wade Allinson indicated that in the BuckMaster area, most of these sites are accessible and are destination points for a lot of ATV'ers. Chris indicated that they will not close any active mines. Anything that is not bonded or actively being mined they want to keep humans from going beyond 10 feet. BLM has 6 Travel Management Plans they are working on, three are required by settlement. San Rafael Desert is nearly done. Five years of work are finally coming to fruition. The biological opinion from Fish and Wildlife is still to come. They hope to have a decision record soon and will have that ready for the public. The San Rafael Swell route evaluations portion of Travel Management are ongoing. Nine Mile Route Inventory of the Travel Management Area Plan has been contracted out. They are working on Wild and Scenic River. Jurassic Monument, they are hoping to open May 15th four days a week to start off, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. A mitigation plan for safety has been submitted to the state office.

Division of Water Rights (DWRi):
Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (DOGM):
Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR):
School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA):
Manti-LaSal National Forest (MLNF): Troy Suwyn indicated that they are teleworking. The office is open and staffed. The Forest Plan Revision is still moving along. They can not hold public meetings, so scoping meetings are on hold for now. Range Creek NEPA appeal period closes on the 8th. Seasonal employees start this week. Fire: they have a hold on prescribed burns. MLNF has no plans for spring or summer prescribed burns. There is still quite a bit of snow up high. Rod Player indicated that he understood that there would be no campfires allowed even in campgrounds. Troy explained that plans are on hold. The State has pushed back for now due to local farmers needing to burn along ditches. June 1st there may be some level of restrictions in place. Gates are being checked frequently. Some gates are closed due to snow. Les Wilberg talked about some trail work that he and his crew have planned and asked to be informed when they can begin work in the areas that are still closed. Sherrel asked about the Gentry/Morhlan road. Troy indicated that he has not been up there yet this year. Leon talked about conflict with the fire marshall regarding burning slash piles. It was Troy's understanding that farmers can burn on their own property. Commissioner Conover talked about the County's stance that farmers are exempt from burn windows because of the need to burn slash piles.

Utah State Parks and Recreation: James Wells, Goblin Valley State Park, reported that the park is fairly slow during the weekdays but full on the weekends. Group sites are still closed but may open on May 15th. Gift shop is closed. They are working with BLM on signage at Little Wildhorse. Ray commented that education goes a long way to mitigate some problems at Little Wildhorse.

Utah State Department of Agriculture:

Washington Delegation Staff: Clay Crozier, Senator Romney, reported that there is nothing new

to report. Larry Ellertson, Representative Curtis reported that they have been watching and following what is going on with the title transfer of Joe's Valley Dam to Emery County and asked if anyone here had heard anything new. Sherrel indicated that he attended a meeting where it was reported that they have reached an agreement with the Forest Service. Now there is a period of time 93 days, for Congress to respond, if they do not act, then it will automatically proceed. There is a requirement that EWCD has to purchase the land under the dam. Sherrel added that It's not all they want, but it is something that they can live with.

6) Additional Issues from Council Members: Sherrel gave a precipitation report. Ray anticipates that the June meeting will be virtual also. July Public Lands has a field trip planned. He suggested discussing the field trip in the June meeting. Commissioner Wilson gave an update on the Castle Solar process. They are moving forward and anticipate beginning construction in the fall. Chris Conrad informed the board that they were notified that the road from Huntington North to Highway 10 through Desert Lake out to Jurassic Monument was approved for the short list for State funding a treated road from the park 6 miles.

7) Concerned Citizens with Emery County related issues. 2 minute time limit.

8) Adjourn