

3-21-2006

## Red Rock Desert Learning Center Core Group Meeting: March 21, 2006

Red Rock Desert Learning Center

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RED ROCK DESERT LEARNING CENTER MEETING  
Bureau of Land Management Las Vegas Field Office  
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive  
Tuesday, March 21, 2006  
10:30 a.m.

*"The mission of the Red Rock Desert Learning Center is to instill stewardship and respect by increasing knowledge and understanding of the Mojave Desert ecosystems and cultures through a unique experiential discovery program."*

AGENDA

1. Introductions & Announcements (5 min.)
2. Approval of Minutes from January 17, 2006 Meeting (5 min.)
3. Update on Project Schedule – Michael Reiland (10 min.)
  - A. Utilities
  - B. Water Line
  - C. Operator RFP
  - D. NEPA
4. Report on Value Analysis Workshops – Michael Reiland / Line & Space (10 min.)
  - A. Cost Estimates/Inflation
5. Curriculum Update – Jeanne Klockow (10 min.)
6. Standing Reports (10 min.)
  - A. Line and Space – Les Wallach
  - B. BLM Capital Improvements – Michael Reiland
7. Committee Reports (5 min.)
  - A. Building Committee
  - B. Design Oversight
  - C. Educational Programs
  - D. Fund-raising and Partnerships
  - E. NEPA
  - F. Operations
  - G. Other Uses
  - H. Wild Horse & Burro
8. New Business (5 min.)

## Meeting Minutes

### RED ROCK DESERT LEARNING CENTER CORE GROUP

Bureau of Land Management Las Vegas Field Office

Tuesday, March 21, 2006

The meeting commenced at 10:40 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Loretta Asay, Kathy August, Blaine Benedict, Christine Brehm, Charles Carroll, Bob Clements, Richard Cutbirth, Nancy Flagg, Christina Gibson, Megan Iudice, Michael Johnson, Jeanne Klockow, Richard Leifreid, John McCarty, Alan O'Neill, Juan Palma, Jackson Ramsey, Mark Rehschinskyj, Michael Reiland, LaNelda Rolley, Frank Tepper, Les Wallach, and Billie Young.

1. Introductions and Announcements

Group introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 17, 2006, meeting were unanimously approved with no changes.

3. Update on Project Schedule

Michael Reiland provided an update on several key project issues.

#### *Utilities*

Michael reported that there were no new updates to report with respect to utilities.

#### *Water Line*

Michael reported that the agency is still working with the water district on the option of a water line or well and should come to a resolution soon. A special agreement with the State of Nevada would not be needed.

#### *Operator RFP*

Michael reported that due to recent changes in the design of the facility, a more design-specific Request for Information (RFI) will be submitted. He invited BLM Field Manager Juan Palma to offer additional remarks.

Juan stressed his commitment to the RRDLCLC project in spite of the volume of work in progress in the Las Vegas BLM office. He is comfortable with the current design of the facility but stated his concern regarding four fundamental issues:

- A. Having a legal framework in place between the Clark County School District (CCSD) and BLM. There must be a written agreement to commit the school district to providing fifth-grade students for the school.
- B. Garnering support for the facility at the highest levels of BLM. This will entail resolving issues related to the operations and maintenance (O&M) of the school – in particular, identifying the source of funds to support O & M on an annual basis. A strong business plan will also be needed.
- C. Resolving the water issues.
- D. Determining who will operate the facility.

Juan stated that hypotheticals are no longer sufficient; specifics are needed regarding the mechanics of the project. He said assistance is needed from the Core Group to produce results in a more timely way. Loretta Assay agreed that CCSD is also concerned about the question of

who will operate the facility and the financial aspects involved in operating the school. Information has been too vague for the school district to make an informed decision.

Michael expressed thanks to Juan for his time and efforts.

#### *NEPA*

Otak, Inc., was hired in 2003 to conduct an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Oliver Ranch property. Recently, the BLM determined that an Environmental Impact Study should be undertaken. Michael Reiland asked John McCarty of Otak to explain the EA / EIS process. The goal of an EA is to determine if there are signs of impact, in which case further analysis may be needed. An EIS is a more formal process that begins with the development of a preparation plan, in which tasks are assigned and analysts use feedback to determine costs and potential impacts. A tentative schedule is organized to ensure tasks are completed in a timely manner. The RRDL project has a tentative review date set for August 2006. Michael Johnson noted that the timeline seems extremely ambitious, but the EIS will be able to draw upon the work already completed in the EA analysis. One issue that will need to be considered specifically for the EIS is the effect of proposed action on the desert tortoise habitat; new surveys may be needed in this area as well as those related to botany. An amendment to the statement of work will be required for Otak to continue past March on the current contract.

Nancy Flagg asked what significant impacts in the EA led to the decision to move to an EIS. John said visual resource impacts and impacts to riparian areas were primary findings. Charles Carroll suggested that there may be a need to amend the Red Rock General Management Plan (GMP) for the Level 2 visual resources, noting that this would mean incorporating different comment periods. As such, Charles suggested the amendment should be done concurrently with the EIS.

Michael Reiland said the notice of intent for the EIS will be published in the coming weeks. There will then be a 30-day period which includes at least one public meeting to discuss design options. Following will be a 60-day comment period on the EIS documents including two additional public meetings. Once modifications are made, an additional 30-day appeal period would then take effect. Late August to early September is the proposed timeframe for the process to be finalized. Juan Palma asked how many years the EIS could be considered applicable to the project or how much the project could change and still fall within the current EIS. Michael Johnson suggested the EIS could be applicable over a five-year time period and changes within the project would have to be minimal. Michael Reiland said the project should not sit for five years with no change.

#### 4. Report on Value Analysis Workshop

Michael Reiland reiterated that costs must stay within budget, and he congratulated Line & Space for their good work. He introduced Les Wallach from Line & Space to give an update on modifications to the project site and structures to accommodate increases in costs.

Les Wallach reported that the 1.2% monthly inflation amount in the Las Vegas market had taken them off guard. Subsequently, the project's design required modifications, but he felt confident that the changes would not detract from the original program for the school. Les reported on some of the significant changes:

- Existing roads and the original ranch site will be used.
- The central plant area is to be eliminated.
- Only 1 dormitory will be built on-grade, with a bunk-bed design, underbed storage, and common bathrooms.

- Flex labs will move from the riparian area to the dorm area.
- The solar bridge will be eliminated.
- The research lab has been simplified.
- In place of the original bus loading and unloading area, students will be deposited at the main administration building.
- All trails through desert area will be incorporated as originally intended.
- The greenhouse has been changed to an outside propagation area with a composting area next to the kitchen.
- The kitchen remains essentially the same but the dining area will now seat two classes at once with a trail running through the building, doubling as a serving line.
- The size of the gear room has been reduced.
- Many indoor functions and meeting spaces have now been moved to outdoors.
- The art pavilion has been modified to a platform structure with supplies stored at the observatory.
- The scope of instructor housing has been reduced.
- The Wild Horse and Burro facility has been reduced in scope by eliminating three buildings, the arena, the catwalk, and maintaining an on-grade view. Horse-handling facilities will now be bid as an alternate, with temporary facilities used for horse activities.

In addition to the design changes noted above, modifications to the administration building include limiting the instructor area to a community table and two workstations and lockers, elimination of one administrative office, no private office for the business manager, and a reduction in the sales area to a wall display only.

There were no questions about the design changes.

##### 5. Curriculum Update – Jeanne Klockow

Curriculum Coordinator Jeanne Klockow reported that the Night Sky lesson plans were completed and will be forwarded to the Core Group and to the Educational Programs Committee for feedback. Jeanne also reported that the Green Building Technology work group is now creating lesson plans for six essential questions.

Work continues between Jeanne and Kathy August to correlate the core curriculum to the BLM mission. In addition, a meeting held in November 2005 with Native American representatives offered ideas on how best to correlate American Indian subject matter into the curriculum. A work group consisting of CCSD American Indian teachers is now meeting weekly to review and adapt the lesson plans. The committee is expected to provide integrated lesson plans by the end of April 2006.

Jeanne reported that 2 of 5 teacher piloting workshops have been held at the Oliver Ranch site. The workshops have been well received by the teachers and are allowing the curriculum to be tested with one of the school's primary clientele. The piloting workshops are expected to be completed by May 6, at which time final changes and an assessment of the curriculum will be completed. Jeanne passed around a manual produced by UNLV Professor Mary Banbury for the teacher workshops, which outlines teaching strategies for the Historical and Cultural lesson plans. Michael Reiland thanked Jeanne for her work on the project.

6. Standing Reports

BLM Capital Improvements

Michael Reiland reported that the conference held in Ohio regarding visitor center design and concepts was successful. He reminded the group that BLM's Visitor Center Core Group meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month, and all are welcome to attend.

Alan O'Neill expressed concerns that the RRDLC operating costs seem high. Although construction costs have been maintained within budget he wondered about the business plan. Michael stated that based on studies of similar schools nationally, operating and maintenance costs could range from approximately \$1.7 to \$1.8 million. Budget estimates include revenues from incoming students as well as special events, scholarships, and conferences. Operations require an average 3-5 years to build funds. At issue is the potential reliance on yearly fund-raising to sustain operating costs.

Charles Carroll pointed out that risk exposure is a big issue with Washington staff and that risk assessment is very critical for a school setting. Jackson Ramsey also stressed the lack of a business plan and the concern that the school will be operating on a deficit annually regardless of the amount covered in the first years. Would any operator be willing to cover these commitments over the long term? Michael suggested that the operator could help develop a business plan.

Michael Reiland recommended considering options for additional fund-raising, because \$400,000 each year does not seem feasible. Michael said he is aware of groups that would be willing to operate the facility but for the potential implications involved in fund-raising. Les Wallach commented that it is unprecedented to have capital costs funded yet be unable to move forward. He suggested lobbying Congressional staff, but Michael reminded the group that BLM is not able to lobby. Jackson confirmed that senators been approached regarding possible endowments through SNPLMA that could be applied toward ongoing operating and maintenance costs. There is no practical way to get a bill written and passed at this time. Alan suggested speaking directly with Yosemite National Institutes about the RRDLC project vis a vis their experience.

7. New Business

Richard Leifried announced a tour of the Ranch on March 30 from 8:30am – 1:00 pm, which will be led by two women who were raised on the property.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m. No future meeting has been set at this time.

# Agenda

Red Rock Desert Learning Center and WHB  
Line and Space, LLC.

March 21, 2006

CORE Meeting  
Las Vegas Field Office  
Design Development Redesign

## Overall Review of Redesign

Introduction/Approach - Budget

Conceptual and Programmatic Proposal

Site Work and Landscape

Administration

Dining

Dormitories

Flex Labs/Research Lab

Observatory and Venues

Wild Horse and Burro Facility

Adjourn