

Commissioner Work Meeting
March 20, 2012
Held in the Fremont County Annex Building

Present were Commissioner Hurt, Commissioner Miller and Commissioner Stoddard.

Also present were Clerk Abbie Mace, Sheriff Len Humphries, Chief Deputy Sheriff Thad Garner, EMS Administrator Bob Foster, Planning & Building Administrator Stephen Loosli, Park & Recreation Employee Tamra Cikaitoga, and Public Works Director Marla Vik. BLM Representatives Jeff Long, Shannon Batisk, Monica Zimmerman, and Field Office Manager Jeremy Casterson

Commissioner Hurt gave a history of the impact the Sand Hill have on Fremont County's infrastructure. He talked about a user fee that could fund a visitor's center and an EMS station. This proposed fee could cover county costs along with sharing the funds with BLM. The county understands it is uncomfortable to charge a fee for access to public lands. We would like to talk about some of the issues the county is having with the impact this is having on the county. He explained the change in the EMS program changing EMT's from volunteers becoming employees. He explained the impact to the sheriff's office.

EMS Administrator Bob Foster gave a handout with the background on EMS and the Sandhills. The annual cost to be prepared to respond to calls at the Sandhills is approximately \$9000 annually. This includes maintenance on the sand rail, along with training and specialized equipment. The number of runs annually is approximately 30. It still requires the same amount of expense for preparedness to respond. We have had a 3 year grant that has expired. This has not been budgeted with BLM for this year or future years. He explained how the county's billing system works and we only receive payment if we transport. If they are transported by air ambulance Fremont County does not receive any compensation. We have applied for the grant for FY2013 in the amount of \$10,000.

Mr. Casterson thought we had \$20,000 for EMS. Mr. Long stated that we had \$15,000 for two years. The BLM has lost the funding because it was not being billed by the county. Mr. Casterson stated they can go for that money in the future but it will have to be budgeted for in the future. They just submitted their budget request in January for 2013. So we are a year out for any funding in the future. This would be a competitive grant process.

Mr. Foster asked why we would need to apply for a grant when these are ongoing costs.

Mr. Casterson stated the grants are the easiest way to receive funding through the BLM. It is extremely difficult to get permanent funding in their budget. The EMS has been an agreement whereas law enforcement is a contract. It is this way because of the rules that BLM has to work with. Mr. Casterson feels we can improve the reporting system.

Mr. Foster asked why there is a difference between law enforcement and EMS. BLM has the legal authority to contract with law enforcement and are specifically prohibited from contracting with EMS and can therefore only use the grant for maintenance and equipment and a funding source for EMS services. They cannot pay for wages for EMS.

Mr. Long stated the reporting system is getting better with law enforcement.

Mr. Foster asked what options there are for any funding for FY2012 and FY2013. We have the sand rail out at the dunes already. We would like some program going forward that would give the county some stability for funding. The county has applied for a grant from Idaho BLM. Ms. Zimmerman explained there may not be funding available to fund new grants without a signed agreement. This will only fund existing grants. There will not be any funding for Fremont County for the application we submitted for 2013. We

need to reestablish the partnership agreement. So basically we don't have any funding for the next two years. There really is no other funding until 2014. Mr. Long suggested going for OHV grants from State Parks. Ms. Cikaitoga explained that we can't use that funding source for EMS services. It was discussed that BLM has been getting great funding for equipment from this OHV Grant. Mr. Long feels this is a source the county can apply for. Even if the county applies for this grant it is 2014 before we would have money from that grant process also.

Commissioner Hurt stated we are currently without any funding for 2012 and 2013 to help with BLM. Mr. Casterson stated there may be a small amount of money they can scrape up from their budget contingency. There was discussion on where to go from here; where we have already put in an application. BLM and Fremont County can form an agreement and have it in place, if any funding may be available.

The money can then be put towards the agreement. Ms. Zimmerman will check to see what else we need to do to get the agreement put together. Ms. Batisk stated they don't receive much money from the Sand hill fee they have in place now, most of it goes to pay labor for and upkeep for the facility. All were in agreement that we need to establish the new agreement this summer. Ms. Zimmerman will work with their state office to have the ground work done if funding becomes available.

Mr. Foster questioned fees as a source for funding at the Sandhills. He opened the discussion about what options are available. He gave an example of how Wyoming works with permitting for OHV and ATV's. He suggested we use BYU-I as a resource to gather data from the users to determine what would be a reasonable fee.

Mr. Casterson stated we need to determine if this would be a county fee or a BLM fee. They have a very complex system they would have to go through. They have some authority to charge fees. It started in 1987. In 2008 the Federal Lands Recreation Act was passed it is very specific as to what fees can be charged for. They would have to go through several reviews which would take approximately 6 months to 1 year to take this through the process and have public support before we go forward.

Mr. Foster explained that we would like to station an ambulance at the sand hills along with personnel especially on high volume weekends. The county has applied for a new ambulance so we can have an additional ambulance available to station at the Sand hills.

They discussed establishing additional fees and asked BLM to please look into it. Mr. Long voiced concerns with enforcement at the private campgrounds that border the sand hills. Mr. Loosli asked if there are any other BLM sites that charge; which we could utilize their fee systems. There are a couple of sites in California that are charging that were discussed.

Ms. Cikaitoga explained we have gone through this fee establishment at the Mesa Fall location in Island Park with State Parks. She stated this has been successful.

Commissioner Hurt expressed the county's frustration we have with having to still respond to accidents and still have to jump through all the hoops to get any funding from BLM.

Mr. Casterson stated he is willing to look and see if the state has any discretionary money available we can tap.

Sheriff Humphries stated we (law enforcement) have a good relationship with BLM, but we do spend more money than what we get from BLM for law enforcement. Mr. Long stated he protects Fremont County very well. He has a great working relationship with the county. Fremont County gets more funding than any other county the state. He always defends us with the funding we get.

Sheriff Humphries suggested we re-sign the BLM river access at the Salem Bridge for Red Road Access to be called the Salem Bridge Access; it is causing confusion. He stated it would help with the sheriff's ability to respond. BLM will look into it.

Chief Deputy Gardner asked if BLM would be willing to help with the replacement of the sand rail when we need a new one and they stated yes. Sheriff Humphries stated we will always respond to any calls whether they are on private or public lands. Fremont County does recognize we as a county have to help pay for the visitors use of public lands in our county. As the economy changes we have to make sure we are ready for the increase in use.

The county is just asking for any help we can get to help us with any funding sources they can.

Ms. Batisk will research other BLM complexes to see if we can find other avenues we can pursue for funding.

Sheriff Humphries suggested trying to build a building at the dunes for storage of the sand rail/EMS Station /Visitors Center.

There was discussion about the Wilderness Study Area and questioned the winter closure area. We need to get BLM, Fish and Game and the county together to discuss the winter closure area. The county would like to discuss changing the boundaries. There is a meeting with BLM, Fish and Game, and Fremont County Sheriff's office tomorrow. Commissioner Miller will plan to attend and bring up this concern from the county.

Mr. Loosli asked if BLM would be interested in partnering with Fremont County on establishing fees for river access for fishing. BLM has a great relationship on the South Fork of the Snake River. They would be willing to look into this. Mr. Loosli asked about joining the South Fork partnership or would we be better to form our own partnership. Ms. Zimmerman recommended establishing a new program. She stated we could look into which would work better joining the partnership or forming our own. She stated that with the South Fork Program BLM puts a lot more money into the administration than what they get out.

They reviewed the Frome Park expansion. We need to make sure we can get the land out of the grazing allotment. The property has been extended for an additional 10 years. The county will still put in the application for the expansion. Ms. Cikaitoga questioned what is going on at the Staley Springs area. The county has concerns with the loss of the public access. This has put more use on the county's access at Frome Park. The other issue we have is the extended fishing season at Henry's Lake. We need more parking. She stated we need to provide access for both motorized and non motorized fisherman.

Commissioner Hurt stated the county is putting together a master plan for what the county's needs and wants are at Henry's Lake access.

Ms. Batisk stated the BLM would like to put together a BLM master plan for the Sandhills in the next three years. The county is willing and would like to be at the table to do that.

Mr. Casterson summarized the meeting. BLM is going to look at any discretionary funding they have both local and state. Look into OHV Grant, Fees on the river, Frome Park expansion, and fees at the Sand hills.

Commissioners thanked BLM for coming together to discuss the need of both the BLM and the county.

There being no further business to come before the board the meeting was adjourned.

Skip Hurt, Chairman
Fremont County Commission

Attest: _____
Abbie Mace, Clerk