

Western Interstate Region Board of Directors Meeting Notes

Wednesday, March 10, 1:30 PM – 4:15 PM Eastern

Western Interstate Region Leadership

President:	Hon. Greg Chilcott, Commissioner, Ravalli County, Mont.
1st Vice President:	Hon. Mark Whitney, Commissioner, Beaver County, Utah
2nd Vice President:	Hon. Dan Joyce, Malheur County, Ore.
Past President:	Hon. Joel Bousman, Commissioner, Sublette County, Wyo.

Western Interstate Region Board of Directors Meeting Agenda

[Video Can Be Found Here](#)

1:30 PM: Call to Order

- **Hon. Greg Chilcott**, Commissioner, Ravalli County, Mont.

1:35 PM: Congressional Western Caucus

Congressman Dan Newhouse is a lifelong resident of central Washington, where he operates an 850-acre farm. He was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014. He serves on the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, which is responsible for funding critical programs for western counties, such as PILT. Congressman Newhouse was unanimously elected Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus in December 2020. Congressman Newhouse discussed the Western Caucus' plans to support county involvement in natural resources management, rural development, climate change policy, and other issues critical to western counties.

- **Hon. Dan Newhouse**, U.S. Congressman (R, Wash.-04) and Congressional Western Caucus Chairman

Questions:

- **Bousman:** If we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the best thing we could do is export clean LNG to replace their coal technology. This would reduce global interests, enhance national security, and support jobs. How can we educate people?
 - **Newhouse:** Western Caucus is a forum for that. These are key points that the administration cannot forget, but they have an agenda. Will continue talking about the impacts of these executive orders, but the legislative deck is stacked against the Caucus. Offered to bring the Western Caucus to our communities to highlight our needs in Washington.
- **Bushman:** Concerned about the boomerang effect of new administrations taking over and rewriting rules from the past administration. Agencies may not defend a grazing lawsuit in his home county. How does Congress end this boomerang effect?
 - **Newhouse:** 4 years is not enough time to change things.
- **Whitney:** Impact of these executive orders in Utah will be drastic on energy and other economic sectors.
 - **Newhouse:** They have real world consequences and it's up to the Caucus to highlight them and work to stop the worst policies.
- **Lunt:** Catastrophic wildfire is hitting every state. Forests are a renewable natural resource. Why do we let it burn but not let it earn? Need to get agencies to make decisions and get out of the way.
 - **Newhouse:** Hope change in administration doesn't turn back the clock. There is a new issue called "smoke taint" that impacts wine grapes—ruins the wine. It's a multifaceted issue beyond

just fire and smoke. Impacts downstream industries in these areas. Working to provide more resources to fight the fires.

2:00 PM: Legislative and WIR Finance Update

Jonathan Shuffield from NACo gave an update on the legislative priorities and finances of the Western Interstate Region.

- **Jonathan Shuffield**, NACo Associate Legislative Director for Public Lands and WIR Liaison
- JShuffield@naco.org or 512.965.7268

Questions:

- **Johnson:** Do you think there will be an in-person PILT Fly-In this year? Or will fly-ins start in 2022?
 - **Shuffield:** Based on the current vaccine distribution timetables, there is a solid chance we can have an in-person fly-in this year.
- **Devlin:** Will the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund formula look like the one Sen. Wyden's team discussed with us?
 - **Shuffield:** Treasury will have to write the final formula, but Sen. Wyden's floor statement in the Congressional Record directs Treasury to work along the lines of what he shared with us last month. He also directed Treasury to work with NACo and state associations in developing the formula.
- **Peters:** You mentioned the need to keep pushing on PILT and SRS even though Sen. Wyden secured extra funding for public lands counties. How do we keep these issues elevated?
 - **Shuffield:** Congress has not been shy about spending, which augurs well for us in PILT and other programs down the line. But we have to convey that the funds under the American Rescue Plan are temporary, and we need to support other programs impacting counties, such as SNAP/food stamps.

2:25 PM: U.S. Department of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) mission spans a wide array of issues, including farm policy, rural economic development, nutrition assistance and forest management. With a budget of approximately \$150 billion, USDA assists local communities with infrastructure and telecommunications grant and loan programs as well. Elizabeth Archuleta, Director of USDA's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, discussed how the Biden administration intends to assist and invest in rural America over the next four years, improve landscapes, and grow local economies.

- **The Hon. Elizabeth Archuleta**, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, USDA
- Elizabeth.Archuleta@usda.gov

Questions:

- **King:** 30x30 conservation plan—is that focused on forest restoration only, or are you looking at other features like wetlands and watersheds?
 - **Archuleta:** It is much broader than forestry. Robert Bonnie from USDA is hosting some listening sessions in the near future, so we would like to hear from counties—perhaps we could get him on a WIR meeting in the not-too-distant future.

2:50 PM: U.S. Department of the Interior

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) manages approximately 500 million acres nationwide, with 62 percent of counties nationwide containing some federal land. DOI oversees agencies with drastically different missions as well, such as the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Kate Kelly, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy at DOI, discussed some of the key public lands priorities for the Biden Administration, including the recent fossil fuel leasing moratorium and the 30x30 conservation plan. Shantha Ready-Alonso, Director of the DOI Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, introduced herself to the WIR Board as the main point of contact for county officials at DOI.

- **Kate Kelly**, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, U.S. Department of the Interior

- **Shantha Ready Alonso**, Director, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
- Shantha_Alonso@ios.doi.gov or 202.538.2965

Questions

- **Bousman:** One of the most critical things you can do is give agencies the resources they need. Increase the ability to store carbon via healthy forests—will benefit environment and economy. Agencies need more funding.
 - **Kelly:** Appreciate the comment.
- **Brandt:** Significant public lands, but restrictions on wilderness areas make it difficult to grow economies. Counties have to provide critical services on public lands.
 - **Kelly:** “Conserve, not protect.” This is about ensuring access and we need to build it out more. This definition of “conservation” should be flexible.
- **Peters:**
 - **Kelly:** This is a great point. I will be sitting down with Forest Service this week to discuss better coordination between agencies.

3:15 PM: Update from the National Endangered Species Act Reform Coalition

WIR's Public Lands Trust contributes to the National Endangered Species Act Reform Coalition (NESARC). NESARC is a broad group focused on improving and modernizing the Endangered Species Act (ESA). NESARC Executive Director Jordan Smith discussed recent regulatory, legislative and judicial actions related to the ESA.

- **Jordan Smith**, Executive Director, NESARC
- JAS@vnf.com or 202.298.1914

Questions

- **Chilcott:** What timeframe are we looking at for new rules and implementation?
 - **Smith:** Career staff likely looking at rules from the Trump administration, but as soon as nominees are confirmed, we can expect it to start.

3:40 Disaster Planning and Mitigation: Accessing FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program

Due to a family emergenc, Sarah Montell, FEMA's Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, was unable to join. Dan Snedden, who works in the IGA office, introduced himself to the Board and offered to put members in touch with appropriate staff as questions arise.

- **Dan Snedden**, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Daniel.Snedden@fema.dhs.gov

4:00 PM: Good of the Order

- **Hon. Greg Chilcott**, Commissioner, Ravalli County, Mont.
- **Kelly King:** put together a list to share rides from Missoula; FEMA grants—follow up with IGA; send webinar info to the board
- **Ferebee:** USFS will have to prepare a package to respond to the infrastructure needs; roads/trails/infrastructure needs in your communities
- **Bousman:** Should we work with you on roads and active management needs on a forest-by-forest basis? Would it be helpful as we go about this, should we work on our needs on the ground?
 - **Ferebee:** Having 3-4 examples that get to specific reasons why these infrastructure pieces are important
- **Chilcott:** What timeframe are we looking at for GAOA funding to hit the ground for projects?
 - **Ferebee:** FY 21 and 22 projects are spoken for. For FY23 and beyond, USFS will seek input from impacted counties.

- **Johnson/King:** How do we advocate with states—need to see what states are getting beyond the state aid, so we can have a grasp on who else is getting money so we're not getting forced to spend our funds when the states get their funds. Eric Johnson emailed Matt Chase about it.
- **Peters:** Mono Co. is split between two USFS regions. Need USFS to work across regions in implementing Great American Outdoors Act project priorities.

4:15 PM: Meeting Conclusion

NACo staff contact: Jonathan Shuffield, Associate Legislative Director, jshuffield@naco.org or 512.965.7268