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JOHN DAY BASIN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Project Summary

The Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management is progressing on the new Resource Management Plan (RMP) for 450,000 acres of BLM-managed lands in the John Day Basin.

We began the project in 2005, and in 2006 published the Analysis of the Management Situation which summarized the status of resources and uses of the land, and framed the issues that need to be addressed.

In spring 2007 we held public meetings in John Day, Fossil, Bend, and Salem to hear public input on how to craft alternatives to address the issues.

Right now the BLM specialists are working to meld input from individuals, organizations, local communities, city/county/state/federal agencies, and tribal governments with the latest scientific findings to create alternatives that conserve ecological resources and provide social and economic opportunities. The focus is on addressing options for resolving the key issues of:

- Access and travel management,

- Landscape health (forest health & fuels management)
- North Fork John Day River.

Later this summer we will analyze the effects of each alternative.

The Draft RMP / Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will display the range of alternatives and expected effects, and be available for public review and comment in early 2008. We will hold public open houses to solicit input on the





Draft. Later that fall, we will publish the Proposed RMP/Final EIS, and then the Record of Decision in summer 2009, followed by implementation of the plan.

Spring 2007 Public Meetings

Over 100 people attended public open houses in February and March to share ideas for constructing alternatives. Many other members of the public sent in comments during this period.

There wasn't always agreement on the best ways to manage the land.

Some said, "Keep all lands administered by the BLM open for motorized use...it brings in \$ to local communities." Others preferred "Limited access...to maintain wildlife habitat."

Some were "Concerned about grazing on North Fork lands, especially on uplands," or that grazing would impact recreation opportunities; others thought we should allow "more livestock grazing and keep agriculture in business – ranchers feed us...and contribute to the local economy."

Despite the divergence of opinions, people did agree that the John Day Basin is a special place, and they want healthy lands and resources to be available for them and their children to enjoy into the future. They told us, "Accommodate ecologic and economic opportunities that are sustainable," and "Provide for a more stable and sustainable economic base," and "Emphasize management that encourages long-term and sustainable uses



of the land," and "Ensure long-range recreation opportunities and ecologic health."

The dedication to this area was clear in the comments. You can view more of the public comments received this spring at the John Day Basin project website (see bottom of page).

Additional Outreach to Communities & Cooperators

The spring 2007 open houses were one way of obtaining input on the plan, but there have been others.

The Monument Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) hosted a meeting June 5 and invited the BLM to present information and seek input on preliminary alternatives for the North Fork area. Landowners, SWCD members and others provided us with some great input on options for livestock grazing, motorized use, and public easements across private land.

On June 26 we will present preliminary alternatives for the entire planning area to the John Day/Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC), an official federal advisory committee. This group meets quarterly to provide advice and recommendations on all aspects of public-land management to the BLM and Forest Service. The general public is welcome to attend and provide input at all RAC meetings. You can find more information on the RAC at <http://www.blm.gov/or/rac/jdrac.php>

Also on June 26 we are presenting preliminary alternatives to our Cooperators. These are representatives of Native American tribes, state and federal agencies, and city and county governments.

Our planning team archaeologist has met with representatives of Grant and Wheeler Counties and the National Park service to develop a proposal that will concurrently protect unique paleontological resources and increase tourism economy in the area (see more, below).



Unique Resource Values

During development of the alternative management scenarios for the John Day Basin, the planning team is considering whether there are any unique resource values in the area, and if so, do they need special protection.

One of the unique resources in the planning area is the rivers. We inventoried 1,400 miles of waterways and evaluated their eligibility for consideration as Wild and Scenic. The main criteria a waterway must have to be considered eligible is “free flowing” (no dams or impoundments). It must also have values that are “outstandingly remarkable” (e.g. fish, wildlife, recreation, scenic, geological, historic, ecological or cultural values).

The inventory found that 25 miles of the North Fork of the John Day River met eligibility criteria. The next step is to review this segment and determine whether it also meets suitability criteria for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River system.

Unique resources can also be protected by designation as Areas of Critical Ecological Concern (ACEC), where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreplaceable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes.

During alternative development we are reviewing the two existing ACECs, Horn Butte Curlew and Spanish Gulch, to determine if special designation is still valid, or if adjustments are needed. We are considering several new ACECs, including one that would protect several unique values: rare paleontological resources, a threatened plant, and stunning scenery.

BLM Planning Team escapes the office!

The BLM planning team spent two days on the JV Ranch portion of the North Fork acquired lands in May, discussing alternative scenarios for live-stock grazing, recreational opportunities, a road network, timber management, and protection of solitude values.

This area is a real gem, and we are committed to producing creative alternatives that protect the important fish, wildlife, and recreational values, while still allowing the general public and local communities to use and enjoy the area. The boss had to pry us out of our campsite on day two when it was time to head back to the office.

Smaller groups of the planning team have spent time in various areas throughout the year looking at conditions on the ground. For example, the range conservationist and soil scientist have inventoried vegetation resources on the North Fork. These trips are essential if we are to accurately describe and effectively manage the resources and uses in the planning area.



Members of the BLM planning team discuss alternatives at the base of Boneyard Canyon, May 10, 2007.

Stay Involved!

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Website: www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/plans/johndayrmp/index.php

E-mail: John_Day_Basin_RMP@blm.gov

Mail: 3050 NE 3rd St., Prineville OR 97754

Phone: (541) 416-6700 **FAX:** (541) 416-6798

Bureau of Land Management
Prineville District Office
3050 NE 3rd Street
Prineville, Oregon 97754

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