

*John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
November 30, 2010- Pendleton, OR*

*Business Meeting RAC Attendees:*

CATEGORY 1		CATEGORY 2		CATEGORY 3	
	Adriane Borgias	X	Aaron Killgore		Vacant
	Terry Drever-Gee	X	Bill Lang	X	Craig Ely
X	Dan Forsea	X	Dave Riley		Vacant
X	Mike Hayward	X	Tim Unterwegner	X	Patricia Gainsforth
X	Art Waugh	X	Berta Youtie		Vacant

*Quorum:* No

*RAC Federal Official Attendees:*

AGENCY		MANAGER		AGENCY		MANAGER	
BLM Prineville	X	Debbie Henderson-Norton		Ochoco NF		Jeff Walter	
BLM Vale	X	Don Gonzalez		Umatilla NF	X	Kevin Martin	
Malheur NF	X	Doug Gochnour		Wallowa-Whitman NF	X	Mary Farnsworth	

*Presenters:* Betty Matthews

*Visitors:* None

*Designated Federal Official:* Debbie Henderson-Norton

*RAC Chair:* Berta Youtie

*Notetaker:* Pam Robbins

*Facilitator:* Christina Lilienthal

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*Meeting Called to Order - Berta Youtie, Chairman*

Called to order at 8:00 a.m.

***DFO Welcome – Debbie Henderson-Norton***

Pleased to see those who could make it despite weather challenges. Requested introductions around, to meet the new Federal officials. A couple of today's presentations will be done via videoconference. We're trying some technologies that can help us trim costs. The RAC also may want to consider holding joint meetings with other RACs in our region occasionally as well, to cover topics that span more than one jurisdiction.

**Agenda Review:** Chair would like to switch the subcommittee meeting time with the reporting time, so the groups can report more current information.

**Subcommittee Reports:**

**Noxious Weeds:** Nothing to report.

**John Day Basin:** Aaron will continue to lead the group. He also sits on the John Day Working Group.

**OHV:** Nothing to report.

**Baker RMP:** Nothing to report.

**Energy:** Nothing to report.

**Endangered Species:** Would like to be involved in the Boardman Naval Training Facility scoping effort.

### Manager's Updates

**Vale District, Don Gonzalez:** No change on many items from the last report. Upgrades are being implemented at the Virtue Flat OHV site. The Baker RMP effort has been delayed until early 2011, but the inventory of areas with potential wilderness characteristics is complete. District staff is involved with alternatives development based on scoping comments for the Boardman to Hemingway project.

**Doug Gochmour, Malheur NF:** The pellet mill in John Day is an Ochoco Lumber Company project funded by the State with ARRA funds. Their system forms marketable bricks from the biomass removed during forest health thinning on the Forest. The effort has created many new jobs in the area. The Malheur is probably the last forest in the nation to start their travel management plan. Public meetings have been very well attended, and they have seen some hostility expressed, often based on misinformation. The comment period was extended by two additional weeks to get the broadest input possible. The Forest is trying to educate the public about which decisions have been made at higher authority levels than the Forest. A National transportation rule ends cross-country travel, so traditional uses are likely to see some impacts.

**Kevin Martin, Umatilla NF:** The Bluewood Ski Area is in the final stages of a sale, which has been enthusiastically received in local communities. The Wildcat II Project was appealed, so the Forest is awaiting the decision on the appeal. The Forest Supervisor expects to sign the decision on North End Sheep Allotment early in 2011. The appeal period for vegetation treatments in Cobbler II ends in mid-December. The Tollgate Fuels Reduction assessment process continues, with proposed actions being presented to the public. The Potamus Fuels Reduction project is intended for a concurrent plan with neighboring agencies. The Forest's Invasive Species Record of Decision was appealed but the court upheld the Forest decision. ARRA funding focused primarily on recreation facilities and trails, with very nice upgrades and expanded trail coverage.

**Debbie Henderson-Norton, Prineville District:** A renewable energy conference was held in Bend on November 9, with a broad array of interests represented. All of BLM's wind energy applications are on hold as agencies meet Fish & Wildlife Service requirements under NEPA/ESA focusing on avian species. A modified approach is evolving as we move ahead and more data is available. A Cascade Crossing update is on the agenda. The John Day Basin RMP FEIS should be issued in Spring 2011 with a 60-day comment period likely. A final ROD could be issued in April/May. Support has been expressed for the John Day River Study on implementing a permitting system, the District intends to issue the decision in December and implement this upcoming spring. An online

permit system will be mandatory for river users in Segments 2 and 3 from Service Creek to Cottonwood during peak use period from May 20<sup>th</sup> through July 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Mary Farnsworth, Wallowa-Whitman NF:** With the leadership change on the Forest; Mary is acting Forest Supervisor until a permanent selection is made. Forest leadership is working hard to maintain an office in Enterprise and finalize a replacement facility. Staff has been very active completing their ARRA projects, with a couple of projects deferred into next field season. The Boardman to Hemingway issue is on the agenda for later. The Wallowa-Whitman travel plan is currently in consultation, with hopes to have it completed in Spring 2011. Invasive Plants EIS is being litigated right now, so the Forest expects a decision in Spring. No injunction was filed, so treatments are ongoing wherever possible. Anthony Lakes ski area was transferred to Baker County in September, and the Forest looks forward to a good partnership with them. The area experienced flooding on Highway 39 that disrupted travel and damaged the roadway. Hells Canyon Road repair work, engineering group has completed much of the work; graveled segments are scheduled for paving this year.

**Q:** Does the Economic Stimulus money roll over into the next fiscal year?

**A:** Funds have been obligated so they'll be able to continue the contracts.

**Strategic Planning Session for 2011**

Potential topics for Council meetings in upcoming year:

<b>Topic/Action</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Noxious Weeds: Statewide EIS step-down for FS BLM District-level EIS		Spring 2011
Technical expert (EPA) on herbicides	New chemicals, regs	
Comments on Malheur Weeds EIS		Feb
Blue Mountain Plan		May
John Day Basin FEIS/John Day River System EA		Feb
Cottonwood State Park Plan		Feb/May
Baker RMP		Feb
Climate Change	Placeholder	
Communication Group	Placeholder	
Energy: B2H; Cascade Crossing		
ESA: Sage grouse State stepdown; Boardman Training Facility		Feb
OHV: Baker RMP; Malheur Travel Management Plan Wallowa-Whitman		

**Q:** Do we know the legal status of the Boardman Training Facility?

**A:** Vale District is still looking into that; the land was moved to military classification in the 1941 War Act, but it's unclear what the limits of time or use are.

**\*\*\*ACTION:** Don Gonzalez will send an electronic version of the results on the land status of Boardman area to Berta Youtie.

## **Blue Mountain Forest Plan Alternatives – Katie Countryman**

Revision update reflects that the proposed action was released in the spring, and many comments were received. Based on that input, five key issues were identified: Access, Ecological Resiliency, Economic and Social Well Being, Old Forest Issues, and Additions to Wilderness. Alternatives include A – No Action; B – Proposed Action Modified; C – Greater emphasis on non-motorized recreation (based on scoping input from environmental groups); D – Maintain or increase access for vehicle use, active forest management and budget sufficient to do all that work (based on scoping input from County governments); E – Active forest management (Wyden bill) with increased budget assumptions; F – Same as alternative E with budget allocations limited to 20% of previous budget.

**Q:** As science evolves in fire management, will modifications be done on this plan?

**A:** This plan is a more adaptive overview, so they will not include models. It is the foundational piece, where site-specific plans will cover changes in prescriptive action.

The Plan effort gave a grid of how acreage will be treated under each alternative.. Management areas are classed into five groups and reflect acreage shifts for all three forests. Management area 1 includes Congressionally-designated areas. Management area 2 includes Special Areas. Management area 3 includes back country undeveloped areas. Management area 4 is the biggest classification on the forests, with the bulk of each forest's acreage. Category 5 reflects areas already developed.

**\*\*\*ACTION:** Katie Countryman will send a CD of the Draft Blue Mountain Forest Plan to Subcommittee members as soon as it is available, so they can review before May RAC meeting.

### **Subcommittee Work Session:**

**Public Comment Period:** No visitors

**Proposed Cascade Crossing Transmission Project:** Deb Schallert (PGE), Kristy Boscheinen (Mt. Hood),

[Deb] Appreciate this opportunity and the RAC's flexibility in working by videoconference. She will take questions whenever RAC would like. Regionally, PGE is looking at this project because the grid system has been serviceable until now. There has been no growth in transmission capability in the past 30 years, and forecasts call for 45% load growth in the next 20 years. Existing contracts for new energy generation and transmission are expiring. The MOU signed by nine agencies proposed expanding/modernizing. The expense of not building is projected to have the region lose out on \$55-85 million.

The 500 kv line is set for 210 miles that would be the only project for cross-Cascades capacity. It meets requests for wind projects and builds new substations and some upgrades. It's mostly a new right-of-way corridor to add to capacity. The project would add reliability and include connection to renewable sources; PGE has signed MOUs with other power providers to leverage the investment.

The selected route is intended to minimize impacts to communities while managing costs. It would parallel existing transmission lines or designated corridors. Public outreach began in October 2009, with 11 open house sessions as part of scoping. This type of project is not a FERC type. There is a three-step process: Federal NEPA, State through the Energy Facilities Siting Council (which incorporates County plans), and Tribal consultation. All parts are operating parallel to one another to smooth coordination. [www.CascadeCrossingProject.com](http://www.CascadeCrossingProject.com) has the full array of information.

The Oregon PUC process is also required, including an Integrated Resource Plan (which was filed in November 2009), technical workshops and more. PGE hopes to have the project in operation by 2015.

**Q:** What is the line supposed to tie into at Salem?

**A:** The Bethel Substation already exists, and they're also considering tiering off at a substation near Stayton.

**Q:** Are these AC lines only?

**A:** Yes. The wind projects cannot use DC lines. PGE is not a large enough utility company to use that DC grid setup.

**Q:** What would the construction phase look like at wild and scenic river crossings?

**A:** Most of that effort would be to figure out the staging needs so that actual stringing the lines could be done by helicopter. They'd have to look at all safety issues, but the actual construction would be of short duration.

**Q:** When/what would the next steps begin for NEPA?

**A:** The interdisciplinary ID team has completed the scoping and is starting to look at developing alternatives. Because it is a proponent-driven effort, that takes a little different course for any changes. Expect to have decision out in two years.

**Q:** What are the primary issues that have been raised in the scoping efforts?

**A:** Visual resource was the one brought up the most – scenic values are important in this area; fragmentation of habitat from needed roads was another large concern. Late-Successional Reserve lands generated interest from the State from a different perspective from the Federal agencies. Some communities are welcoming the projects as an avenue to facilitate wind energy projects and economic benefit. In the Salem area, easements are an issue because of development, so that shifts to Exclusive Farm Use areas, which brings other issues. The Boardman Bombing Range has its own set of logistical considerations.

**Comment:** This is probably going to be a topic that will need to be revisited in another 5-10 years, because the scale is not large enough to meet long-range goals. DC current is economical when the lines are 300 miles or more.

## **Wolf Update – Craig Ely**

On August 5, 2010, the court designated the State as agency in charge of wolves in Oregon. Oregon's plan has been in place since 2005, and they updated it. There are two packs they continue to monitor, and the only collared wolf of the Wenaha pack was shot and killed two days before deer season started. Recent sightings include some south of Baker City, but ODFW cannot trap during winter. However, they can capture via helicopter and dart. They hope to get a GPS collar on the alpha male, because it gives great insight on movement and behavior. However, the GPS units are not very durable, so it limits the tracking record.

Congress is looking at some bills which would remove wolves from the ESA list or allow taking in specific circumstances. It's highly improbable that any of the bills would move from committee to be voted on. Wyoming has no species plan for wolves, so it becomes a topic whenever the issue of de-listing comes up.

**Q:** Is there a threat to humans when they move into interface areas?

**A:** It could happen; there are cases on record of predation directed at humans, but it's the exception. Wolves are habitat generalists, and can travel much farther than biologists originally thought. They easily go wherever they can find prey.

## **Sage grouse – Berta Youtie**

About five years ago, the state sage grouse team was instituted, and their plan must be updated every five years. There was heightened interest from the public at the October meeting, so the new plan has been delayed until April. The new plan sets population objectives, and how they measure that has changed. Habitat objectives have included language that addresses "no net loss of sagebrush habitat," which generated some concerns. Implementation is also a topic drawing attention, because core habitat was identified, and parties wanted some clarification about impacts on economic activity. Core habitat extends wider than the previous guideline that set protections around lek only. The "no net loss" standard includes breeding, nesting and rearing habitat. Defining "development" is also essential to clarify how this will be implemented. Stakeholders have concerns about the classification of habitat categories. Main goal is preserving the species such that it does not have to be officially listed. Climate impacts are currently being written into the plan. The scarcity of data for wind energy projects meant that the team had to use oil & gas as their basis for disturbance response. Biologists hope to get more accurate data as we move ahead. The public wanted a broader stakeholder representation going forward with the plan.

**Q:** Is all core habitat treated the same?

**A:** No. The goal is to preserve 90% of core habitat, and some areas can be re-occupied.

**\*\*\*ACTION:** Craig will send sage grouse plan to ESA subgroup members.

**\*\*\*ACTION:** ESA subgroup will draft a comment on the Oregon plan for full RAC review.

## Tentative Plan – Meetings in 2011

<p><b>First quarter</b></p> <p><i>March 1, 2011 – @ Pendleton</i>          Boardman Navy Proposal          Sagegrouse – Christian Hagen briefing          John Day River EA          Baker RMP          New Member Orientation/Elections</p>	<p><b>Third quarter</b></p> <p><i>September 7-8, 2011 – @ Baker City</i>          Joint w/SEORAC          Wally Gibson – NWPPC          Blue Mountain Forest Plan</p>
<p><b>Second quarter</b></p> <p><i>May 3-4, 2011 – @ The Dalles</i>          Cottonwood State Park          Cascade Crossing Field Update          Noxious Weeds – Megan Conroy          Malheur EIS</p>	<p><b>Fourth quarter</b></p> <p><i>November 29, 2011 - @</i></p>

### Round Robin:

**Berta Youtie:** She wrote a letter to the Boardman Training Facility in response to public outreach on their EIS scoping period, and requested that the RAC receive a briefing from them. She will be asking the ESA subcommittee if they would like to take this on.

**Art Waugh:** No issues emerging on OHV issues right now. A non-affiliated club had to go in to rehab a meadow area that had been torn up by off-roaders. Art also shared articles on area wolf activity.

**Bill Lang:** Nothing

**Dave Riley:** Need to formalize the ESA subgroup if we will be using one.

**Craig Ely:** Will help with the wolf presentation

**Tim Unterwegner:** Spent several days with Pat Dunham on his property along the John Day steelhead fishing. They had a good time.

**Mike Hayward:** Biomass plant is almost ready to be up and running in John Day. There is also a small plant in Wallowa County. Folks are sorting out EPA concerns about biomass emissions; first take had no history or science data, so they took a very conservative stance, equating it to coal plants. As data is gathered, these renewable energy sources may get modified standards. Small projects may be exempted (Enterprise School, Harney District Hospital, etc.) Wallowa Resources is assisting several schools and other facilities for potential use of biomass energy.

### **Closeout:**

Next Meeting March 1, 2010 in Pendleton.

Adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Pam will verify whether the RAC could have role in Forest lawsuit or similar situations.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Katie Countryman will send a CD of the Draft Blue Mountain Forest Plan to Subcommittee members as soon as it is available, so they can review before May RAC meeting.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Prineville District BLM (Monte Kuk) will send a CD of the Draft John Day Basin FEIS to Subcommittee members as soon as it is available, so they can review before March RAC meeting.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Vale District BLM will send a CD of the Draft Baker RMP to Subcommittee members as soon as it is available, so they can review before March RAC meeting.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Baker subgroup to bring draft comments to the March meeting.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Try to get Christian Hagen to brief RAC on the ODFW sage grouse recovery plan (possibly by teleconference).

\*\*\***ACTION:** Don Gonzalez will send an electronic version of the results on the land status of Boardman area to Berta Youtie.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Christina will contact the person from the Navy to request a briefing at the March meeting.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Craig will contact Christian Hagen to videoconference with us at the March meeting.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Kevin will contact the RO to arrange videoconference from the Deschutes for Mr. Hagen to join us at the March meeting.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Pam will check into the capacity of the RAC to reimburse subject matter experts who travel to make presentations for RAC meetings.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Pam will contact new members to share proposed schedule for 2011 RAC meetings.

\*\*\***ACTION:** Craig will send sage grouse plan to ESA subgroup members.

\*\*\***ACTION:** ESA subgroup will draft a comment on the Oregon plan for full RAC review.

 1/31/2011

Berta Youtie, RAC Chair



Debbie Henderson-Norton, RAC DFO