

**John Day Snake
Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2006-Field trip to John Day Basin
September 13, 2006-RAC Business Meeting
John Day Federal Building**

Field trip attendees: *Adriane Borgias, : John Tanaka (Chair), Art Waugh, Terry Drever-Gee, Berta Youtie, Frank Bird, Phil Shepherd, Robert Parker, David Riley, Mike Hayward.*

Field trip presenters: *Brent Ralston, Berry Phelps, Steve Smith, Henry Eichmann.*

Business Meeting RAC Attendees: *John Tanaka (Chair), Bill Lang, Art Waugh, Terry Drever-Gee, Berta Youtie, David Moryc, Frank Bird, Phil Shepherd, Robert Parker, David Riley, Mike Hayward.*

RAC members not present: *Shirley Muse, Dan Forsea, Adriane Borgias (Attending BLM transportation planning meeting on behalf of RAC)*

Quorum not achieved; 2 members from Group 1 missing

RAC Federal Official Attendees: *Dave Henderson (Vale BLM), Barron Bail (Prineville BLM).*

Federal officials not present or represented: *Umatilla NF, Wallowa-Whitman NF, Malheur NF. Gary Benes was called to Washington, DC. Kevin Martin and Steve Ellis had multiple incidents on their forests.*

Presentors: *Brent Ralston, Spencer Hovecamp, Jeff Blackwood*

Visitor: *Tina Welch*

Business Meeting Coordinator/Recorder: *Virginia Gibbons*

Facilitator: *Pattie Hammett*

Meeting Called to Order-*John Tanaka, Chairman*

Introductions/New Facilitator-*John Tanaka*

Travel voucher procedures-*Virginia Gibbons*

Please get travel vouchers in ASAP due to fiscal year end.

RAC Business Update-*Barron Bail*

Dan Forsea David Riley, Phil Shepherd and John Tanaka memberships expire seven days from now. Memberships are in process of being approved.

Recreation RAC Update-Barron Bail

Rec RACs not published in the federal register yet. Possible publication on Friday. Letters will be mailed to interested candidates.

Forest Service has lead; one RAC will represent OR/WA

Main objective is setting/reviewing recreation fees.

Representation of different aspects of the recreation community, with room for State & local representation

Hells Canyon Complex Relicensing Update-Dave Henderson

On schedule with FERC

Came through trial-type hearing process with no hearing

Able to settle on issues with company; settled over semantics vs substance

Filing extensive comments on Draft EIS

60-day period to close out on alternative process

Sometime early next spring...

Q. Do we know State's comments?

A. No...although it should be posted on FERC website

Q. Did NOAA weigh in on fish passage?

A. State of Idaho did....BLM did not because it is outside of our jurisdiction. A number of other entities addressed those concerns. Primary concern was on quality upstream habitat; on a 40-50 year re-licensing project, question is being asked as to how much can we achieve?

Q. Can you explain what affects the alternative will have on federal land?

A. It's almost as if FERC is operating under a different version of NEPA. We are working on cross-over understandings...Their staff is looking at impact footprint and what the company needs to be responsible for. Key oversights: the habitat acquisition piece. The FERC recommendation was below what the company was offering...and below what the BLM was asking for.

Barron: Pelton Round Butte: FERC did not include all they agreed to in the final licensing. Recent federal court decision reminded FERC other federal agencies have a role.

Q. Appears that high level work associated with this project will need to be ongoing. Have you thought about that from a staffing standpoint?

A. Yes, the implementation is often more important to us than it is to the company because it requires input and oversight. We have looked at how we will follow up with the work plan. A position has been identified to help track and monitor follow up actions and to administer permits.

John Day Basin RMP-Powerpoint Presentation-Brent Ralston

Handout provided: "Grand Design, John Day Basin Resource Management Plan"

AMS complete; sending CD to 2,500 people on the mailing list

*****Action Item: Request to send CD to RAC members (Virginia follow up with Mike Williams)**

Analysis of Management Situation-Key Findings

Q. Notice there is no fisheries/wildlife identified as a key finding. Why is that?

A. If current management is already providing the trend we are looking for, we do not identify it as key. The John Day River Plan addressed a lot of fishery issues for the main stem & North Fork. Grazing is not identified for the same reasons-current mgmt trend is moving towards meeting desired conditions.

Q. What about the ESA issues around Sutton Mtn?

A. A lot of the mainstem concerns are covered in the Wild & Scenic River Plan. The main question that we want to answer with the AMS: Is our guidance giving us the wrong trend on the ground? If we can adjust on-the-ground management without the management guidance, we don't need to address it in the plan.

IE, in previous land use plans, we said we want to convert shrublands to grasslands. If it is causing a decline in sage grouse, we may want to go back and say we want to keep sage for preservation of species.

RMPs generally do not cover a specific degree of detail; it's a more general direction.

Q. There may be recommendations in Salmon Recovery Plan that provides direction-how do you address that?

A. We need to make sure our plan is not contrary with other plans before implementing. This could potentially require a plan amendment.

Public Involvement

*Community profile-Grant, Wheeler & Gilliam counties-James Kent Assoc
Economic Profile Workshop-John Day and Fossil-Sonoran Institute
BLM public meetings-John Day, Pendleton, Fossil, Forest Grove, Bend
Comments received-300 letters received for 1200 comments*

Community profile report

- 1. Traditional economic sectors declining*
- 2. Settlement patterns changing*
- 3. Loss of public land access*
- 4. Government cannot be trusted*

Economic Profile Workshops

- 1. Loss of public land access*
- 2. Niche markets have diversified economy*
- 3. Kids are leaving area-population getting older*
- 4. Driving force in economy is retirees*

Q. Is this information shared with the public? It seems like very valuable information to share with the local communities.

A. We visited with local communities to determine the names of folks who should be at the meetings. The local communities followed up in making personal phone calls and the meetings were very well attended. We asked those who attended to share the meeting results and workshop-provided CDs with friends and neighbors.

Comment: Baker City had that type of meeting as well and it was well represented by local folks.

BLM Public Meetings/Comments

OHV issue at Little Canyon Mountain overshadowed the public meeting in John Day

OHV use received 400 comments total-we did get several copies of a petition

Access-Friends of Rudio Mtn, etc

Planning Issues

OHV Designations at Little Canyon Mountain and North Fork of the John Day

Management of the North Fork

Land Tenure Zoning Designations

Access and Travel Management

Special Designations

Riparian Mgmt

Forest Health

Fire & Fuels Mgmt

Next Steps

AMS done; identified planning issues

Next step is setting the criteria-OHV, forest health & developing alternatives

Q. Given your timeframe and our meeting schedule, how can we engage in a useful way?

A. Chris Knopf is working with a subgroup to work with consistency guidance for OHV on a much broader level, which should be done in the next 2 months. After that is complete, Art has volunteered to head up a subgroup to look at the OHV criteria for the John Day Basin. General area designations of open/closed needs to be designated in the RMP and we need the RAC to help us define those areas through the development of criteria.

Two main areas of input (provided by Tina):

OHV criteria

All other decisions

A detailer (Kris Martinson) is coming in for 6 months until we can fill permanently behind Brent. We are asking Kris to clarify the extent and timing of RAC input.

John Day Basin RMP subgroup: Berta Youtie, Adriane Borgias, Art Waugh and David Moryc.

Blue Mtn Forest Plan Revision Update-Provided by Terry Drever-Gee, John Tanaka and Mike Hayward

Dave Schmitt was unable to provide an update today due to fire assignments

Report from Terry:

FS is engrossed with fires and the planning team is behind schedule. Some differences with co-conveners. The counties will hire a person to monitor the process.

We commented on the wilderness areas-asked them to take into consideration fire suppression & weed management.

Dave wanted very specific comments on roadless area designations. The subgroup did not feel comfortable in representing their constituencies in that manner. Instead, we sent a letter with more general feedback about the process.

We will have other opportunities to make comments during other stages; folks may send their comments in on an individual basis.

Baker County Commissioner was hesitant to accept Sonoran Institute's recommendations because they felt they did not look closely enough at traditional economic options and how those might be included in an economic profile.

Comment from John: OSU is being hired as a third party to look at the Sonoran Institute report.

David Riley: Potential net loss of wilderness based on what is a road. After the field trip, it appears BLM is experiencing some of the same confusion regarding a road definition shared between the agencies.

Mike Hayward: RAC can make a comment on a policy vs the on-the-ground specifics.

Issue being: What the definition of a road is...

Barron Bail: Chris Knopf should be working on specific questions we want them to address:

Action Item: Art and Adriane address some of the bigger questions associated with transportation planning:

-What are limited designations/routes? What can you do or not do it?

-How do you define a primitive road?

We need consistent, agreed upon standards that are applicable to all land use plans.

Barron: We have a good definition of how to define a road vs a "way"-but that is geared toward wilderness study decisions. What we need to ask now, ie in the John Day Plan, is what do we want? Working with the county, there are areas currently open but there is no legal right to travel that road. We need to work with the county to not drop off their road designations so people can continue to have access.

Engaging with the John Day process from the beginning and having Art and Adriane involved should provide a good opportunity for the RAC to provide those comments.

State Strategy: Grazing-Barron Bail

Handout-“Fully Processed Grazing Permit” and “Current Status of Fully Processing the Backlog of Grazing Permit/Lease Renewals in OR/WA

Permit renewal/S&G work

Permit renewal

Grazing permits issued for 10 years. Late 90s, courts said we needed to look more closely at renewals. From 1999-2009, we’ve fully processed 873 permits out of 1530 (31%) for all public lands east of the Cascades. We completed S&Gs on 661 allotments (36%) of permits. On Prineville, our percentages are lower due to working on the larger allotments first. Prineville (503) & Vale (6.5 million-ac) offered by Dave, tee-hee ☺) have the most permits to renew. State Office has issued guidance on how to process permits. Team from WA is coming out to Eastside Districts to look at how we are completing our permit renewals. In allotments that fail standards, we look at why it is not meeting the standards. If current cattle grazing practices are causing this, we have to make a change within two grazing seasons.

Q. Given the 2010 strategic planning, you may not have the staff to implement this. Is there a provision in allowing for this workload?

A. State Director has said that we will get all of the permits renewed.

Comment: We have heard word there may be a movement in Congress to develop a healthy rangeland bill..more to come??

Barron: A new Grazing Rule recently went into affect. A lawsuit was filed that stated public participation was exempt from the process. BLM’s position is that the final Rule does not prohibit the involvement of interest publics at any time.

Q. What are the permittees appeal rights?

A. We notify them of any changes and they can file an appeal following an internal administrative procedure.

Public Comment Period

Joe Bachtold-Live and work in John Day for six years.

ORV use in the John Day Valley/Specifically, Little Canyon Mountain

LCM surrounded on 3 sides by private landowners and to the south by wilderness.

Currently, BLM allows OHV use on LCM (approved in 1985). Local folks have had concerns about OHV use. The use has intensified and it has turned into a bit of a firestorm for ranchers, miners and property owners.

Issues:

- 1) **Noise** has become a huge issue and there is no enforcement. Activity happens for 7-8 hours every weekend, rock is thrown on the roadway and there is some blatant disregard for property owners .
- 2) **Public Safety** I can't use the trails or take my kids up there when OHV users are out there. One of the OHV users is now a paraplegic after jumping the road.
- 3) **Fire** A tremendous fire hazard with the grasslands. There is a home for disabled people that could be difficult to evacuate. The OHV users don't always use spark arresters.

OHV use is a very popular activity and it is a part of the fabric of this community. There is probably a need for someplace for these folks to recreate. I think you need to look at suitability requirements; and I don't believe LCM meets those. There are areas in Unity, Morrow Co where you may look for alternative spots.

Frazier Nichol-Grant County resident for 30 years on Dog Creek.

We live at the upper end of the road and had BLM land adjacent to us. It was exchanged several years ago and turned over to private ownership. As of today, the Malheur Forest will be at Level 4 planning for 44 straight days for extreme fire danger. We've had OHVs, four-wheelers and dirt bikes come up private roads to our property during these conditions. I've checked our signs which said no ORV use, and those had been torn down. A previous fire that started a couple years ago were rumored to be started by ORV users. I worked 30 years for the FS and I've always been very concerned about biodiversity and the impacts that motorized vehicles have on native species. I don't know of any instances where native species have been improved by OHV traffic, such as in fighting weeds, but I'd like to hear about it. I urge you to recommend consideration to the BLM planning team that there be native species corridors identified that keep unauthorized motorized vehicles out. We need to have areas for recreationists who enjoy the noise and the motorized experience, however, we believe those who enjoy this type of recreation to be in the minority. Please locate these activities away from residential areas, where people value quiet at night and on weekends. Propose to the team that other sites are used for this type of recreation. The LCM site, which is a highly populated area, has homes that pre-date the invention and use of these vehicles.

Facilitator: Thank you to both of you for participating in the public comment period for the RAC.

Q. Do you have overlaying jurisdiction with local law enforcement?

A. We'd need to identify specific hours of use, etc. Bigger issue-some of these may be addressed through the work of the subgroup.

Finalize 2006 work plan/Subgroups-John Tanaka

*John Day RMP-Berta (chair), Adriane, Art, Phil & David Moryc, Frank Bird.
 Blue Mtn Sub-Terry (chair), David Riley, Phil Shepherd, David Moryc.
 OHV subgroup-Art (chair), Adriane Borgias, Shirley Muse, Frank Bird
 BLM transportation planning subgroup- Adriane Borgias, Frank Bird
 Noxious weeds- Berta (chair), Shirley Muse, Terry Drever-Gee, Phil Shepherd*

******Action Item: Virginia update RAC roster to reflect subgroup assignments***

***Salmon & Steelhead Recovery Planning-Spencer Hovecamp and Jeff Blackwood
 Spencer Hovecamp***

****Spencer expressed interest in attending JDS RAC meetings when possible, providing additional updates***

*Clarification: Informal information sharing-not agency policy
 Major population group maps-Recovery Planning Units
 Snake River Steelhead ESU
 Middle Columbia Steelhead
 Major Population Group (MPG)*

*TRT-Technical Recovery Team
 Regional scientific experts, peer review*

*Sounding Board-GRMW Board in Snake Basin
 Local stakeholder feedback, recommendations during drafting process*

*Drafting Team-staff biologists-NIIMS, ODFW, other federal, state & local entities
 Compose synthesis plans-sub basin, action plans*

*Expert Panel
 8-12 scientists, divided between regional and local experts
 Define limiting factors and threats*

*SRD-Salmon Recovery Division
 Domain-scale draft recovery plans
 Published in Federal register
 Will likely conduct public meetings*

*Basic components of a Recovery Plan
 Status of the species
 Limiting factors
 Threats
 Recovery Actions-Watershed board review
 Monitoring, Evaluation, Adaptive Management*

Jeff Blackwood-Assisting with public involvement process

On the mid-Columbia, steelhead is the species listed; in NE Oregon, it's steelhead and salmon Recovery Plans play an important role in the indirect affects and consequences on FS, BLM and local communities

Plan is an amalgamation of existing information

Recovery Actions and Implementation Schedules will be heavily influenced by Recovery Plans

Reasonable opportunity for de-listing the mid-Columbia steelhead; in NE OR, the salmon populations are not near reaching the levels needed to consider de-listing.

Set priority basis for habitat funding

Started over a year ago going to the Grande Ronde model watershed. Started to talk about process but did not have a lot of information. Developed a broad sense goal statement for de-listing in NE OR. We are working through the limiting factors and threats now. Local expertise will be needed to identify threats.

*We had a meeting in June and another about 3 weeks ago. We've received valuable insight and feedback from workshops. **Next workshop is scheduled for Oct 24.***

Would be happy to provide additional updates; NIIMS wants as much involvement as possible before the draft is released.

Q. How does this relate to the judges ruling?

A. It's principle to what 3 agencies can do to mitigate. Simultaneously, recovery planning process is ongoing. They are totally independent, although substantively, there is a lot of overlap. The intent of the remand is to get a non-.....?

Q. Seems like from looking at the maps, most of the areas are public lands. Is there a way for the RAC to weigh in as intermediaries between the public agencies?

A. If this group has a role, its different than the model watershed.

Potential action item: RAC may have a role where Salmon Recovery Planning overlaps with the John Day Basin RMP or the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision.

Dave Henderson: We need to have a conscious decision at the strategic level if a RAC role applies. Perhaps the RAC can give advice as to what affects recovery planning might have on these concurrent planning processes. Part of what drove the North Fork exchange was fisheries.

Comment: Don't see the Salmon Recovery Planning identified in the John Day Basin RMP planning process.

Q. Don't you think it would be beneficial to highlight drivers of plans, such as salmon recovery and energy?

A. We try not to put too much of today's priorities because the plans tend to address a longer cycle.

Action Item: Jeff will send John Tanaka information on the next workshop.

RAC members may call Jeff anytime with questions. The recovery planning is taking longer than expected because we are interested in getting it done right. Anytime, the RAC is willing to play a role, we welcome that.

Action Item: *Since Mike Hayward is on the committee, John recommended he play a leadership role with how the RAC might engage.*

Mike: *We may want to pick an area or key project and discuss how it might be affected by Salmon Recovery (future field trip?) This will force us to look at things and decide where we need to implement-whether it's private or federal.*

FUTURE AGENDA ITEM: *Spencer/Jeff want to come back before and after draft hits the streets.*

Timeline: Final draft published in Fed Register Dec/Jan '07 on Mid Columbia. Snake Basin reviews will follow mid-year '07.

Subgroup Updates

Noxious Weeds-Wrote a comment letter to the Blue Mtn Forests Noxious Weeds EIS and included a copy of a letter to the Secretary.

Planning-Update already provided

OHV-Update already provided

Roundtable

Dave Henderson-*Workforce planning issues-impacts on each office with services offered and staff retained, some attrition. Implementation date no later than Dec 1. Expect priority work will drive decision space/design work force based on budget. Term permit renewals are not discretionary.*

Dave Riley-*pass*

Spencer Hovecamp-*pass*

Bob Parker-*pass*

Phil Shepherd-*Mentioned last time, we were looking for a person for SE OR. Didn't work out; re-post position-looking for someone who can coordinate habitat work with BLM, FS, Nature Conservancy, OSU, NRCS, etc. Q. What will you do differently this time? A. One key point is determining whether the person should be stationed out of Burns. There are a lot of good reasons to have someone there, but we may need to be flexible where someone is located. Dave Henderson offered to talk with Phil after the meeting about strategies for this.*

Frank Bird-*During the field trip, it would have been a great opportunity to walk up Stony Creek.*

*****Action Item: More walking on field trips*****

David Moryc-*If we have the opportunity to do field trips or do on the ground work, is there something on the BLM plan that we can engage in? It would be a nice break to identify a field-oriented project vs just looking at policy.*

Berta Youtie-Deschutes Basin Native Seed Bank is becoming a more formal group. Several grasses coming along, we have a card and logo. Anyone interested, let me know.

In Crook County, people are interested in restoration efforts, with 5 destination resorts coming into county.

Crooked River Watershed Coordinator departed. Berta is filling in on that position for the next several months.

Tina Welch-Like to clarify my role in John Day RMP-as the overall manager, I make sure we have good qualified people on the RMP. One objective is to keep project on time and within budget.

Some resource areas are already adequately covered under existing plans. Very much welcome your input AND will be scrutinizing ideas carefully to avoid "project creep".

Feedback: You may want to delineate that more specifically in the guidance that you are sharing.

A. It is in the summary but probably but it is subtly stated..

Terry Drever-Gee: Thank you for putting together the field trip; it was great.

Art Waugh: Thank you for the field trip, the look at the newly acquired lands and the new possibilities for involvement.

Bill Lang: Fish recovery process-I can't imagine any other single issue that has more power to change things than salmon recovery. So, I think the RAC needs to address it somehow. We should put this on our list as an item that we should be aiding BLM in any way that the RAC can.

John Tanaka: On Friday, the Society for Range Management is having a tour of the changes that have occurred on Mt St Helens-give me a ring if interested.

Went to the coop conservation listing in Redmond. The RACs are on the record and hopefully, they've heard from other states as well.

The issue re: strategic workforce planning and federal employees, retirees-all natural resource professions are looking at what kind of pressure we can bring on the feds with regards to continuing education, work force.

Needs assessment on social sciences-interviewing RAC members starting next week.

Barron Bail: Fire season numbers-85,000 fires and 9 million acres, 16,000 firefighters on the line, 18 fatalities, 10 burnovers with injuries, 2 helicopter crashes. Big season, long season and CA season is just starting.

Hired a new field manager, Molly Brown, for the Deschutes Resource Area. Molly is currently working in Mammoth, CA and starts Oct 1.

Warm Springs Biomass Facility has not received tax credit yet.

Clines Butte EA project dealing with motorized, right next to Eagle Crest destination resort, major project for defining road & trail system.

Comment: First meeting where we've had not FS representation. Perhaps we can bump the fall meeting back a couple of weeks? We have it at this time because of terms ending. If we held the meeting later, we may not have members approved. We have given feedback up the line on this several times.

Scheduled '07 Meeting Dates & Field Trips

Monday, November 27-Meeting in Pendleton

Tuesday, April 3rd-Meeting in Pendleton

Tuesday & Wednesday, June 26 & 27-Field trip on the 26, Business meeting on the 27th in John Day

Tuesday & Wednesday, September 11 & 12 – Field trip on the 11th, Business meeting on 12th in Baker City

/s/ John Tanaka, Chair

/s/ A. Barron Bail, Designated Federal Official