

John Day Snake RAC Meeting Notes (Approved)
November 8, 2005

Facilitator: Debbie Lyons
Recorder: Virginia Gibbons

Present: Mike Montgomery, Bob Rock, Randy Rasmussen, Dave Henderson, Barron Bail, Adriane Borgias, Terry Drever-Gee, Dan Forsea, Art Waugh, Shirley Muse, David Riley, Phil Shephard, Berta Youtie, Michael Hayward, Frank Bird, and John Tanaka.

Not present: Bill Lang, David Moryc, and Robert Parker.

John Tanaka called the meeting to order.

Debbie Lyons reviewed the agenda.

Virginia Gibbons reminded everyone to mail travel vouchers to her at 3050 NE 3rd Street, Prineville, OR 97754.

Critique/Discussion of Tri RAC-John Tanaka

The group discussed the Tri RAC meeting. General consensus was that there should be more specific topics for discussion. The second day was the most meaningful for most attendees. Because of the expense involved, it was suggested future meetings be held in a more central location. There was minimal attendance from the Washington RAC at both meetings, and a suggestion was made to consider holding the next meeting in the Tri-cities area. The group felt there was value in getting together with the other RACs and the State Office attendees. Future focus should be on core issues for the multiple RACs.

Review/Approve Minutes-Debbie Lyons

Debbie distributed copies of the PowerPoint presentations delivered at the last RAC meeting as promised. Minutes from September were reviewed, but did not contain information on the global warming discussion with Steve Ellis.

Action: Debbie to add global warming information to the September meeting minutes, revise draft and send to RAC. Acceptance of September minutes will be finalized at next RAC meeting.

Charter Changes-Debbie Lyons

A major change is that Forest Service Supervisors can now serve in the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) capacity for the JDS RAC. There was a minor change of wording for organizations represented. The title of the position currently occupied by Phil Shephard was officially changed to Fisheries & Wildlife (including wild horses and burros).

Action Item: The name of Wallowa Whitman National Forest needs to be added to the address listed in the charter on the list of DFOs. (Pam Robbins to amend or update at next charter submission.)

John Day RMP-Barron Bail

Brent Ralston was identified as the Team Lead for the John Day RMP, and a briefing paper was distributed. Prineville received funding for John Day RMP for a 4-year planning process. A contract has been started for study of Wild and Scenic River eligibility and suitability within John Day Basin. James Kent and Associates (Priester) are conducting a social inventory and analysis of the population in the planning area. The Sonoran Institute will be conducting several economic profile workshops for use in the planning process. This is being shared with the Baker Resource Area in the Vale District. BLM is expected to work closely with Grant and Wheeler County as cooperating agencies. The timeline for the process was reviewed.

Discussion was held on the level the RAC wants to be involved in the RMP for the John Day Basin, i.e., is there a particular place for RAC involvement? Will the RAC want to form subcommittees? On the John Day Wild and Scenic River Plan, the subcommittee worked directly with the district, and met with ID team members one to two times per month. There is a need to identify whether the right things are being considered in the plan. Adriane expressed interest in the RAC serving as a liaison with the public on right of way issues.

Action Item: Schedule Tina Welch/Brent Ralston for presentation/discussion at the next RAC meeting (provide plenty of discussion time).

Subgroup Updates

Planning-Terry Drever-Gee

Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision Process (Mike Hayward)

The planning team will be reporting to the board in Portland on November 18. Over this winter they will put together specifics on Wild and Scenic Rivers, wilderness, and range suitability. There is a meeting scheduled for co-conveners in early December. The next round of public meetings will be in the April-March 2006 timeframe. A tentative date for decision is the end of next year.

Phil Shephard and John Tanaka reported that they attended field trips near Baker and John Day (respectively) for the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision. The field trips were well attended (50-60 people). They visited the North Fork of John Day CG, wildlife viewing area, and ski area. Most of the time was spent driving, but it was helpful to sit next to new people. Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) representatives, ranchers and miners had opportunities to share their perspectives. There were some good opportunities to stop at viewpoints. The stops were at project sites, and missed the plan's landscape level focus.

There was some uncertainty expressed on the RAC's continued role. There should be more specific information available after the co-convener meeting.

Action Item: Mike Montgomery share RAC observations with Dave Schmidt prior to the next meeting.

OHV-Art Waugh

The Forest Service recently released its new OHV policy. Local levels determine designations/routes. It's happening with the Forest Service, and there is a desire to see BLM move in the same direction (i.e., gathering site-specific information and making designations). Consider other uses: Rights of way need to use OHVs to access facilities. We have authority to apply administrative permission to certain cases. Is it true that public lands are open until closed? BLM uses standardized processes for closures, including Federal Register notices. The OHV designations are generally a land use planning decision. Some designated areas in Forest Plans are closed to motorized use. In the National Forest, areas are generally open unless designated closed. Every National Forest has 4 years to complete an OHV plan under the new policy. The OHV component won't be addressed in the Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision.

Noxious Weeds-Berta Youtie

Forest Service EIS came out within the last week. Interesting approach with rationale provided by Linda Goodman throughout document. 2-4D use was left out. Regional EIS does not get specific with forest direction. The current plan for the three eastern Oregon forests is to write an integrated purpose and need statement and then prepare three different NEPA documents.

Phil proposed the RAC serve a role in reaching out to constituencies on separate forest documents. When forests better determine direction, we are interested in having a discussion on the role of the JDS RAC in the process.

Action Item: Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur and Umatilla keep the RAC informed as to how the RAC can integrate with the individual forest planning processes for noxious weeds.

BLM VEG EIS-Anticipating 90-day comment period; release around November 10. Berta will set conference call dates with the subcommittee so they can prepare a proposal for the entire RAC. Phil, Berta and John formed a new subcommittee for this purpose. Input will be needed from the RAC before comments can be finalized.

Sage Grouse-Berta Youtie

State plan was passed; it's likely that each district will have implementation teams.

Berta proposed that sage grouse be elevated to a full subcommittee in FY 06; and ensure we have people from Baker and Prineville represented.

The role the RAC has with local working groups for sage grouse has not yet been determined

Dave said that sage grouse habitat was a bigger issue. Local working groups are a tool for helping prioritize projects. The bigger role for RAC is helping with rangeland health and setting district parameters associated with the plan.

FY06 Work Plan Review

The group completed a flip-chart exercise to draft the FY 06 Annual Work Plan. The draft plan will be completed at the next meeting. Subgroup member assignments will be completed at that time.

Election of Officers

Berta made a motion to re-elect John as Chair, Dave Riley seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Frank Bird nominated Berta Youtie as Vice Chair, Shirley Muse seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Roundtable

Art Waugh reiterated that Tri-RAC meetings should include more issues-oriented discussion.

Mike Hayward said he enjoyed both Mike Mottice and Jim Kenna being available for the Tri-RAC meeting. Malheur needs grazing consultation completed, timber sale, WUI collaborative project.

Dan Forsea said the Tri-RAC meeting accomplished more the second day. He noted that the weed problem is getting worse.

New member Frank Bird gave the group some of his background. He has a masters in fisheries, worked in Alaska 17 years for Fish & Game; NOAA, BLM; and finally the National Marine Fisheries habitat field office in southwest Oregon.

Shirley Muse said the Tri-RAC meeting was productive, especially the second day.

Berta Youtie said the Tri-RAC meeting was good.

John Tanaka invited everyone to the Society for Range Management's upcoming meeting. He will become president at that meeting.

Barron Bail said Robert Towne, the Prineville Deschutes Resource Area Manager, will soon be the Spokane District Manager.

Pam Robbins said the Centennial of Antiquities Act will be marked in 2006. There will probably be more information coming to the RAC on that topic.

Bob Rock gave his compliments on the Tri-RAC meeting. He said he was working on a salvage EA and Joseph AMP (appeal process).

Mike Hayward said the "safety net" (Secure Rural Schools and Self Determination Act) that supplies money to counties was up for grabs. Stay tuned for word on funding. This could mean drastic impacts on eastern Oregon counties.

Phil Shephard said as a relatively new member, he finds updates and briefings helpful. He said the Tri-RAC meeting was productive, but thought the distance was too far to travel.

Adriane Borgias said she appreciated hearing perspectives and contributing to the future of the RACs.

Dave Henderson announced that Penny Woods is moving to Reno, leaving on Dec 10. Vale District will have no permanent field managers in place. Negotiations on a settlement agreement with Idaho Power for Hells Canyon Dam Relicensing have come to an end, and we are now pursuing the traditional Federal Energy Regulatory Committee process. Tribal consultation is occurring. In mid-January, draft terms & conditions will be submitted. Dave thanked the group for their continued commitment and said he looked forward to the next couple of years with the RAC.

RAC FY06 Meeting Schedule

Weeds subgroup will meet in December to discuss BLM VEG EIS.

Full RAC Meetings

Feb 7 in Pendleton (Salmon recovery, weed subcommittee (Phil report out)

May 2-3 near Warm Springs (Biomass field trip in central Oregon)

Sept 12-13 in John Day

Meeting was adjourned by John Tanaka.