

Blue Creek Bay
BLM Public Meeting
June 12, 2007

BLM staff in Attendance:

Eric Thomson, Field Manager

Brian White, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Stephanie Snook, Public Affairs/Planning & Environ. Coordinator

Lisa Wagner, Budget Analyst

Bill Cook, Natural Resource Specialist

Eric Thomson welcomed and thanked the public for attending the meeting. He provided an introduction of staff present to help with the meeting and discussed the background information on land acquisitions in Blue Creek Bay. He mentioned that the Blue Creek Bay area was identified for future site development in the recently completed land use plan (BLM Resource Management Plan). He stressed the importance of focusing on only the BLM land issues; not the private or other land owners in the area and that BLM has no control over the lake levels, buoys or other lake-related issues.

Brian White provided a PowerPoint Presentation that described and illustrated the 736 acres of land BLM acquired through a combination of land exchanges and acquisitions. Past BLM actions include a limited timber harvest to remove trees storm-damaged trees; removing broken, dead and down trees; reforestation (planting trees); Sunnyside Road reconstruction in conjunction with Eastside Highway District; and wetland restoration. BLM is planning on a new culvert to improve fish passage.

Restrictions now in place include:

No loaded firearms

48 hour camp limit

No camping except on log landing

No campfires

No OHV use except on county roads

No firewood collection

No storage (unattended) of personal items for more than 12 hours

BLM provides a portable toilet for use in the summer recreation season and patrols the area one to two times per week.

Brian described the steps and timeline involved in planning for future considerations at this site, including completion of the PrePlan Analysis.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/CONCERNS prior to break-out sessions:

Q = question

C = comment

Q.: Are you considering a deep water boat landing?

A.: We can

Q.: Is this an island of BLM land – is there other contiguous land?

A.: There is no other adjacent public land. The 736 acres is all the BLM has in this area.

Q.: Are you concerned about the wetlands?

A.: Yes, everything above the ordinary high water mark is considered wetland in the bay.

C.: We are interested in private conservation, on the SE corner of private land and have been trying to get access through BLM.

A.: BLM is aware of the attempt to get access.

C.: Dust from use of the roads is a problem. The landing road is a county road. The Yellowstone Trail used to be paved, it is now graveled. The Sunnyside road is also graveled. If BLM develops the area and more people use it, the dust will be worse.

C.: Multiple uses in this area may increase the use under the bridge. Due to life and safety issues need to consider having boats travel slowly under the bridge.

Q.: Are you considering wildlife conservation or reducing the fire hazard with selective logging?

A.: BLM has a small project planned with the Fire Smart program next to reduce fuels around homes in the area. Within 200' of some homes lies BLM land so it will be treated also. Mechanical treatments within 200' of homes would be completed using a shaded fuel break – removing small trees and brush, keeping larger trees.

Q.: There is already a BLM boat launch site at Wolf Lodge. What research or data do you use to show there is a need to add another site? What data do you have that shows the current sites are at or above-capacity? BLM should consider road and safety to access any future development.

A.: We would need to look at the use at the existing sites and evaluate or study this in more detail.

Q.: What is BLM doing about noxious weeds?

A.: BLM has a weed crew, treating mostly roadsides and log landings. Treatments focus on spotted knapweed, toadflax, orange hawkweed. We also have some biological control (bugs) for knapweed.

Q.: What amount of budget is targeted for development at Blue Creek Bay?

A.: We rely on annual appropriations and cooperative effects with non-profit groups like Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited and others.

The public was invited to provide Opportunities and Concerns within four topic areas:

- Conservation,
- Historical,

- Vegetation and Fuels, and
- Recreation.

Information was noted on flipcharts under each of these topics as follows:

Vegetation/Fuels Management

Concerns:

More downfall on BLM from December (2006) windstorm
 Unleashed pets
 Mountain bikes on hiking trails
 Keep motorized vehicles out
 Christmas trees being topped/cut
 Signs falling off, need reposting
 Area is being overexploited by marking as accessible to public

Opportunities:

More thinning needed
 Preserve entire area
 Key issue – fire and fuels treatment
 Oil or other dust control on road to landing
 Develop hiking trails

Historical Resources:

Concerns:

Mullan Trail access needs to be controlled to protect the resource
 No hiking trail along Mullan trail corridor

Opportunities:

Carefully consider interpretive/educational aspects

Recreation:

Concerns:

Clientele currently “transient” use, temporary stays. Creating a mess.
 Campfires, loud music at landing area
 Condition of portable toilet; need more than one
 More persistent effort on patrols needed
 Use of road to transport boats to a landing/launch poses a serious public safety concern. Roadway is designated as a bike route.
 Clarify riparian rights – BLM role in water-based facilities
 Dust abatement – cooperate with Eastside Highway District
 Survey other boat launches/capacity to determine need for additional launch
 Motorboats and skiing conflicts with non-motorized users
 Road maintenance, long-term access via Yellowstone Trail.

Opportunities:

Hiking trails
 Mountain biking – avoid high-impact downhill activities
 Pursue non-motorized water activities
 Bow hunting – regulating

Make log landing area day-use only – put seasonal restriction in place (no overnight camping in summer)

“Supervised use” in any developed camping/other facilities via camp host. May reduce problems.

Conservation:

Concerns:

Unmanaged use: fires, vandalism, cutting of trees for fires on-site

Coeur d'Alene salamander habitat

West-slope cutthroat trout spawning, Bull trout habitat

Historical sites

Birding area could be disturbed by too much development

County response time is poor, or lack of response, to incidents

Keep area open to bow hunting and foot access

Fire hazard near homes

Safety of landing area users

Don't develop deep water moorage/landing

Dust and sediment from gravel/dirt roads

Opportunities:

Define where, when (camp) fires can be built

Consider camp host to manage public use

Day use for log landing area

Permitted use

Environmental education

Use landing for kayaks, canoes (non-motorized uses)

Make the whole bay a no-wake zone

Develop trail system: Hiking, equestrian, non-motorized, non-mechanized

Interpret Mullan Trail and Shady Rest stop