

From: [Roger Brandt](#)
To: [BLM_OR_RMPs_WesternOregon](#)
Subject: Comment letter on West Oregon RMP regarding - recreation
Date: Wednesday, July 04, 2012 5:40:49 PM
Attachments: [BLM Scoping for 2012 RMP - comment regarding recreation.pdf](#)

Greetings,

Attached is a PDF version of a comment letter being submitted during the scoping period for the Western Oregon RMP and regards recreational opportunities that should be provided on BLM land.

A copy is pasted below in case the attachment does not open.

Thank you.

Roger Brandt
541 592-4316

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July 4, 2012

TO: Scoping Team - Bureau of Land Management, PO Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208
FROM: Roger Brandt, PO 2350, Cave Junction, OR 97523 541 592-4316
rpbrandt@frontier.com
RE: Western Oregon Resource Management Plan

Dear Scoping Team for Western Oregon Resource Management Plan (RMP)

The BLM asked: *What types of recreation opportunities should there be more of or less of on BLM lands?*

The development of recreational facilities is one of the five PURPOSES of forest/timber management listed in the O&C Act.

Recreation is a forest product

The RMP needs to recognize recreation as a forest product and develop analysis models that acknowledge the economic value that recreation contributes to the economy in terms that can be compared to the economic values of log production, a forest management activity that may reduce or impair the use of BLM lands for recreational activities. The economic analysis should be written in terms of lost revenues from recreation over the projected span of impact - the annual losses over a span of decades until it is estimated recreational activities (especially those of high priority to the public) can be restored. A complete economic analysis will help provide a more accurate cost/benefit estimate for forest management projects and help the BLM become more effective at contributing to economic stability of local communities and industries.

The RMP needs to establish protocols that require all district offices to provide COMPLETE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS so the public can be accurately informed about the economic gains and losses from forest management to include understanding how management efforts for development of recreational facilities or habitat restoration and fuel reduction efforts might

impact the production of logs for the timber industry.

The RMP needs to develop a management strategy that produces a steady stream of logs for the timber industry while at the same time uses these harvest projects as a way to increase recreational facilities (scenic landscapes, diverse plant/animal habitat, shaded trails, clean rivers, etc).

Understand the recreational activities of most interest to the public

The BLM can determine what type of recreational opportunities should be increased on BLM land by looking at the result of recreation surveys conducted nationally and in Oregon and California. These include the National Survey of Recreation and Environment (NSRE), Oregon State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), California Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP), and many others conducted by recreation industries, tourism industry, health and fitness organizations, National Park Service, etc. (see last page for examples)

Over the years of reading these surveys I have noted that the results have a common thread. Below, I have tried to list the top five recreational activities enjoyed by the public (listed in what I recall as the order of highest priority with full acknowledgement this is a very generalized summary taken from surveys with sometimes divergent objectives):

Walking (around 80% of survey respondents)
Driving to view scenery (usually around 60% of survey respondents)
Activities involving water (lakes, rivers, ocean)
Day hiking
Viewing wildlife (especially bird watching - one of the fastest growing recreation activities)

The new RMP needs to provide a diversity of recreational opportunities and there will be a much larger number of the public enjoying the resource if it aligns with the present and future recreational opportunities that the public prefers.

Increase the type of activities that support other BLM objectives

The objectives of improving habitat for wildlife, clean water for rivers, and fire resilient forests all represent ways of increasing recreational opportunities. Recreational facilities contribute to the local economy by increasing travel spending and elevating quality of life values that make real estate more marketable and communities more attractive to business and industry development by entrepreneurs who want to establish their enterprise in an area of high recreational opportunity and scenic landscapes. In this way, the objectives of habitat restoration, clean rivers, etc, become integral to the economic stability of a community.

The new RMP needs to develop a model for assessing the economic value that habitat restoration, clean rivers, and fire resilient forest contribute to the economy and a way for them to compare these dollar values with the dollar values of forest management project that detracts from habitat, impacts clean waterways through degeneration of watersheds, and increases fire hazards by encouraging the growth of shrubs that emerge after a canopy is removed (and also become an impenetrable barrier to recreational access when these shrubs grow into thickets - the cost of mitigating this needs to be included in the analysis). The new RMP must require district staff to do a complete cost/benefit analysis of how a forest management project will create or destroy job development opportunities and is stated in a way that can be clearly understood by the public, especially tourism/recreation business owners and operators who may suffer significant economic impairment as a result of forest management practices that focuses only on the development of jobs for the timber industry.

Understand recreational motivators

The NSRE identified that there is a rapidly growing interest in family oriented activities to include family groups with children, youth of various ages, parents, and grandparents all doing an activity together. This might reflect the changing demographics of the American public that result in an increase of ethnic traditions focusing on the family. The RMP should look forward into the next two decades to understand what recreational opportunities an increasingly family oriented society will seek and make development of these recreational facilities a priority so the BLM can be more effectively positioned to provide these facilities as this societal trend grows.

Scenery is a profoundly important recreational resource. The Oregon SCORP (pg 152) pointed out that aesthetic attributes have the strongest associations with physical activity and the study on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California 2007 (California CORP, pg 15) documented that 98 percent of the respondents indicated that viewing scenic beauty is an important part of the enjoyment of their most favorite activities. In addition, the California survey documented that 93 percent of the respondents said that feeling in harmony with nature was also important to their enjoyment of the outdoors. Similar results were concluded in the 2002 Geotourism Study done by the Travel Association of America in collaboration with National Geographic that documented nearly two thirds (61%), about 94 million people who travel annually in the United States, say their traveling experience is better when the destination preserves its natural, historic and cultural sites and attractions. Almost three fourths of the people surveyed in the Geotourism Study (71%, or about 109 million people who travel annually) indicated it is important to them that their visit to a destination not damage its environment (Stueve, 2002). Scenery and preservation is important to the majority of travelers.

The reason that the California survey is being called to your attention is because there are a significant number of California travelers that pass through southern Oregon who could be potential users of recreational facilities and contributors to the economy through travel spending. Forest management on BLM land could have a very negative impact on tourism spending if it detracts from scenic resources or gives the traveler the impression that southern Oregon is not "living in harmony with nature" because of high impact logging operations on BLM lands. It is understandable that a local resident who grew up in a logging environment or logging advocates who are jaded to the impacts of logging might think this is ridiculous but scenic values represent a critical marketing concern for the livelihood of businesses and jobs that are dependent upon attracting travel money during the travel season. They will be severely impacted by forest management activities that shock or disgust the traveling public and cause them to take their travel money out of Oregon. The loss of travel spending could easily be in the millions of dollars annually for many western Oregon communities.

The impacts of Oregon's history of high impact logging practices may already be significantly impairing the ability of western Oregon communities to compete for tourism dollars. In 2007, the intensely logged state of Oregon attracted about **8 billion** dollars in direct tourist spending (Central Oregon Visitor Association, 2007). In the same year, California, a state with minimal logging impacts, attracted **96 billion** in direct tourism spending (California Travel, 2007). If the BLM could manage lands to increase scenic values that help increase travel spending in Oregon by one billion dollars, the result would be the creation of about 12,000 jobs - an admirable outcome of forest management.

The new RMP needs to assess what the potential job creation in tourism/recreation industries might be when estimating economic outcomes for forest management project. Don't focus exclusively on forest management that creates a small number of timber jobs at the cost of obliterating the opportunity for creating a much greater number of jobs in other forest dependent industries. A model needs to be developed that helps managers

determine how forest management projects can result in job tradeoffs so projects can be altered to create the greatest diversity and number of jobs by using forest management to put the greatest number of forest dependent industries to work.

The new RMP must make retention of scenic values an integral outcome of all timber management projects with emphasis on conducting work so the outcome results in, or at least gives the impression, that the Agency is making an effort to manage the forest in harmony with nature. Develop a model to estimate the losses of income to a community's travel and recreation businesses and industries that may be caused by high impact, visually noticeable, logging operations that change the appearance of the landscape. Require districts to include these losses in all economic cost/benefit analysis of forest management project in a way that can be compared with the gains made through log extraction. The analysis must include an estimate of the accrued loss over the span of time it is expected for the forest to regain an appearance that makes it perform as a valid marketable asset for tourism dependent enterprise or over the span of time when the next logging operation will occur.

Align with the objectives to improve American health

According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC), rates of physical inactivity and obesity in the U.S. have reached epidemic proportions of chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and various cancers. Regular, moderate exercise has proven to reduce the risk of developing coronary heart disease, stroke, colon cancer, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity and depression. Physical inactivity, overweight, and obesity contribute to the **rising health costs**. The U.S. economic costs associated with a growing number of American citizens being overweight or obese were more than \$117 billion in the year 2000. In 2003, the state of Oregon spent an estimated \$291 per person on medical costs related to obesity (Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity). Oregon's total estimated medical costs related to obesity in adults that year was \$781 million, nearly 6 percent of the state's total health care bill (Oregon SCORP, pg 148).

Recreational facilities on BLM can help increase physical activity and reduce the rising cost of health care. The new RMP must recognize the ability of these facilities to reduce obesity as an economic value and should include in all economic analysis of forest management projects how much the development of or loss of recreational opportunities impacts the value that these lands can contribute to reducing the cost of health care.

The O&C lands offer a unique opportunity to accomplish goals of improving national health because of the way these lands are checker-boarded into the community where they can provide a diversity of recreational opportunities adjacent to residential areas and travel corridors. The Oregon SCORP (pg 5) points out the importance of recreational facilities **that are conveniently located** because these have been found to be positively associated with vigorous physical activity in a number of studies among both adults and children. In the summary of Key Literature Review Findings (Oregon SCORP, pg 153) the more distant recreation facilities are from an individual's residence, the less likely they are to use it.

The new RMP needs to make development of recreational facilities on these lands a strategic objective with the desired outcome being to increase physical activity and reduce the cost of health care caused by the epidemic of obesity and over weight in American society. Develop a model to measure the potential economic value that recreational opportunities on O&C lands can return to the economy, perhaps measured over the span of twenty years or more. Make development of recreational facilities that improve health a strategic goal. Develop draft agreements staff can use for establishing partnerships to achieve these goals through partnerships with state recreational planners, Surgeon General Office, and organizations who are working to combat this issue. Develop a collaborative

promotion strategy with stakeholders (tourism, health advocates, insurance companies, community improvement advocates, etc). Create ways to measure success and require this to be reported in annual reports along with estimates of how much recreational forest products contribute to reduction of health care costs.

Public use of BLM land may be significantly increased if there are more ways for residents and members of the traveling public to access them. Many are "land locked" inside a barrier of private land that prevents local residents from enjoying the resource. I acknowledge there is usually at least one way to access these parcels of land but if a resident lives on the opposite side of the BLM property where this access point is located and has to drive a mile or more (it is four miles for me to drive around) to get to the other side where they can enter the property, it isn't "conveniently located" no matter how close they might live to it. If easy access is a key factor in the public using these lands for recreation, the use of these lands would be greatly increased if there was more than one access point located on different sides of the property.

The new RMP needs to negotiate with land owners of property adjacent to and "land locking" BLM land to provide an entry corridor from residential roads on each side of the property that is wide enough for foot traffic, equestrian, and mountain bike users. If the target BLM property is to be used for motorized recreation, then these corridors should be wide enough for ATV and motorcycles. Develop guidelines and standard agreements and guidelines that BLM staff in district offices can use to negotiate a corridor with land owners. Also have draft agreements that can be used to establish partnerships with nonprofits and community groups who will raise the money necessary to install fencing and other infrastructure necessary for opening the corridor and maintaining it. Consider how these corridors might be made wide enough to provide firefighting access to protect property.

Sincerely,

Roger Brandt

Attachments

Below are two examples of priority recreational activities that were identified in surveys I happened to have easy access to during the writing of this comment letter. Included FYI

The Public Opinions and Attitudes Survey 2007 in the California Outdoor Recreation Plan (2008, pg 16) discovered that Californians' top 15 activities (by participation) were:

1. Walking for fitness or pleasure 74.2%
2. Driving for pleasure, sightseeing, driving through natural scenery 59.8%
3. Beach activities 59.2%
4. Swimming in a pool 50.9%
5. Day hiking on trails 46.9%
6. Wildlife viewing, bird watching, viewing natural scenery 45.9%
7. Jogging and running for exercise 39.8%

Table 4: Activities sorted by percent participating

Activity	Percent participating	Mean days	Mean hours/day
walking	80	64.3	1.8
picnicking	68	5.2	3.2
sightseeing	63	9.9	4.1
visiting historic sites	62	3.6	3.1
ocean beach activities	54	4.1	3.9
day hiking	52	6.6	3
children/grand children to playground	39	5.7	2.1
exploring tidepools	37	1.5	2.5
freshwater beach activities	33	2.6	4.8
other nature/wildlife observation	31	5.4	2.8

Senior citizen participation in recreational activities, Oregon SCORP, 2008, pg 39.