

*John Day Snake
Resource Advisory Council
Pendleton, OR
Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2008- Business Meeting*

Business Meeting RAC Attendees: Frank Bird, Art Waugh, Adriane Borgias, Berta Youtie, John Tanaka, Mike Hayward, Phil Shephard, Terry Drever-Gee, Bill Lang, Dave Riley, Mark Webb, Pat Dunham

RAC members not present: Robert Parker, Dan Forsea

Quorum: Yes

RAC Federal Official Attendees: Dave Henderson, Kevin Martin, Steve Ellis, Ayn Schlisky, Tom Mafafa, Carole Holly for Gary Benes

Presenters: Jeremy Littell,

Visitors: Lori Timmons

Designated Federal Official: Dave Henderson

RAC Chair: John Tanaka

Notetaker: Pam Robbins

Facilitator:

Meeting Called to Order/Introductions-John Tanaka, Chairman

Travel voucher/Update Roster/

Need to sign travel authorizations & vouchers & return to Dave, or mail to:

Bureau of Land Management

c/o Sally Hall

100 Oregon Street

Vale, Oregon 97918

Election of Chair – John Tanaka, Unanimous

Election of Vice-Chair – Berta Youtie, Unanimous

RAC Business Update-Dave Henderson

RAC Handbook updates will be distributed. Some members have more than one handbook, so we may want to consider doing an entirely new book to assure that all material is the most current. Some expressed interest in getting the material on disk, so they only print what they need, to save paper.

Umatilla Access and Travel Management Planning Info-Kevin Martin

Travel rule issued in 2005, requiring Forests to look at roads, trails, and areas to assign appropriate designation. North two Districts, plus North Fork John Day RD all have system in place. East portion of Heppner RD has been in place for more than 15 years. West side of Heppner had no designated routes in place since the 1993 initial plan. The new Forest Service travel rule gave a good opportunity to re-evaluate the uses and status of these acres. Morrow OHV Park has affected activity in the area, with exponential increase in ATV use in the area. The OHV park has specified trails, and adjacent forest areas have had no rules for use. The seven-fold increase over the past 30 years means that access has to be managed for the benefit of all. The Forest began a public involvement effort in September 2006, and did active contact with users in hunting and recreation communities. Forest is building a mailing list of those who expressed interest. They want to be sure that affected people would have early awareness of pending changes. They've issued three newsletters and publicized on the Forest website, sent formal mailings, and have gotten feedback through many avenues.

In February 2008, they identified about 191 miles of routes that are open to all uses; 16 miles for all vehicles with seasonal closures for game management. About 80 miles of closed roads would be available for Class I and Class III vehicles. Public feedback received after that show that there is a range of opinion about appropriate access, even within the same stakeholder groups. There is broad interest in recreational riding; they want loops and access from designated recreation sites, and those may conflict with other recreation-user desires.

Before any actions were proposed, they had meetings in Monument, Fossil, and Heppner. Turnout was about a dozen to 25 people. They returned to those communities to deliver comment forms and discuss the potential changes. Folks had some initial trouble grasping the reason that changes were being considered, but there is greater understanding over the past year. Right now the proposed action is out for review; the map does not show all roads, but specifically the ones proposed to keep open for OHV. Materials presented to the RAC include map, scoping letter to the public, proposed action, and a comment form. Feedback was encouraged right away. The draft EIS will be out by late June-early July, with a 30 day comment period.

The two primary things are looking at a range of motorized access most suitable to resources and expected uses. Forest is looking at the need for access to the Morrow and Grant County OHV park area. They will attempt to accommodate safety concerns as well.

Q. Basis of the travel rule – is it open unless signed as closed, or closed unless designated as open?

A. It will all be designated, and updates to maps will be issued if there are changes.

Q. Concern about the scope of people queried. Did the primary audience just include OHV users?

A. The Forest tried to include everyone in their efforts, and they continue to listen to opinions from all sides of the issue. They're developing alternatives based on the input from all public input.

Q. Impressed with the effort to talk to hunting groups, and hear that they don't speak with one voice. Is there one opinion that is expressed more often than another?

A. It seems pretty balanced – some feel they really need their ATV when hunting; others feel strongly that the vehicles spoil their hunting experience. There will always be people who break the rules, but there are also people who report them. Most people want to do what's right, but it's important that they understand exactly what the rules are about a specific place.

Q. Why were the roads that were previously closed going to be opened?

A. They will be closed to passenger cars and pickup trucks; OHV can already access these areas within the 91,000 acres.

Q. Users have seen a real decline or lack of opportunities for Class II uses. Will there be any focus on providing trail segments that add a challenge to the users' experience? Also concern about the street-legal requirement, as the fastest growing segment of OHVs is the larger (but not street-legal) type OHV. Will the Forests make sure there is provision for Class II?

A. Have heard little about this segment in early scoping. For steeper or trickier routes, there is little in the current project proposal. The Class II is so broad it ought to be divided into IIa and IIb, to make a differentiation between the types of uses.

Q. Are you talking with the BLM about this proposal? Grant County wants to see that these routes are coordinated to have connectivity on the North Fork Umatilla.

A. Yes.

Q. Will there be work exceptions for this?

A. Yes.

Comment: Many community folks are opposed to the park, because they're concerned that the Umatilla will be mostly closed to shift everyone to the OHV park. The acreage disparity is an issue for members of the public. There needs to be a landscape-level look at the multiple uses, so that every acre does not have to support each use. It seems like there is adequate acreage for people seeking solitude within the wilderness, and a very limited portion for OHV use.

Response: About 40% of the Umatilla is wilderness (20%) or roadless (23%), but there is motorized access to roadless areas.

Response: The wilderness areas are the least accessible by ATV anyway, so there is concern about roads appearing where they didn't exist before.

*****ACTION: Determine how the RAC wants to get involved on the Umatilla Travel Management EIS, since the comment period ends between RAC meetings? Kevin and Dave will coordinate on the timing of RAC involvement in the Plan.**

Fire Career Camp

There is evidence of good community involvement. Is there university involvement? Grants may be available based on the focus on WUI issues. Camp helpers in the disciplines are always welcome. John, who works with OYCC, may be a good source for grants or resources. Goal on the forest is to

have the camp be self-sustaining. Catering was the most expensive portion of the effort. With students and staff, it was about 25 people for each meal. Forest personnel are going out to the high school in about two weeks with some graduates from the camp to show Junior students what the camp was about. Out of the 14 attendees, there are maybe 10 who are candidates for summer hire.

Q. Is there a shortage of people going into the resource careers; was that what prompted the camp program?

A. Not sure about that. High schools in Heppner area were involved with outdoor school, and this is mainly a continuation of things going on through the schools.

Climate Change “101”

Climate Impacts Group focuses on impacts of climate change. There is much going on in this area, so he has selected the slides that span from broadest to localized scope. Their “jurisdiction” is mainly the Columbia River basin. <http://cses.washington.edu/cig/>

Global mean temps have gone upward – part of which is within expected cycles – but the overall trend is upward, and especially in the most recent decades. Increases in greenhouse gases are changing this balance. There are natural and human causes for change. Sun outputs vary on 11 year cycles; volcanic eruptions, and ocean processes. The big question is determining which “forcing factors” have the greatest influence – human or natural. Observations over long periods of time parallel very closely with the data records. Between 1900 and 2000, there is averaged a 1.5 degree increase in temps.

Precipitation variations don’t pose a clear trend, but differences influenced by El Nino (2-7 year shifts) and by Pacific Decadal Oscillation (many years at a time).

Water content of snowpack has been declining in the last 50 years over most of the Pacific Northwest. Timing of spring runoff is trending earlier; about 10-30 days sooner between 1948-2000. About 30% of the trends are statistically significant.

Projections include plausible guesses about factors influencing each scenario. If no changes to current policies, the next hundred years will see extreme temperature rises. Average changes by 2040s show average changes of 3 - 4.1 degrees, and 1.9 - 2 inches precipitation declines. Streamflow alterations can have a big impact as runoff is diminished, leaving vulnerability to drought, flood potential, and impaired water quality.

Plant stress increases non-linearly to the increases in temperature. The atmosphere absorbs moisture more readily at warmer temperatures, so evapo-transpiration is much greater. Dryness of vegetation contributes to vulnerability to fire.

Adaptation will require familiarizing with climate change and its impacts; determine what information can aid decision-making; improve capacity for monitoring; emphasize flexibility, resilience and diversity in planning for ecosystems; reduce the emphasis on static guidelines; address regulatory, policy, and process barriers; science management and management policy partnerships are critical.

Planning for climatic change in forests is beginning.

Contact: jlittell@u.washington.edu

Q. Do you have recommendations for forest planning that can accommodate this science?

A. Yes. Efforts that help with adaptation and mitigation are the best. General recommendations are widely applicable, but in many cases, the vulnerabilities for specific sites are thornier to make recommendations for. Vegetation modeling for specific areas is in early stages.

Q. Forests are launching plans where this information could be helpful. Can we tie the Climate Change group in with the planners to make sure the right questions are asked and strategy options are surfaced?

A. They're glad to help, and would love to repeat that process.

Q. Please explain the meaning of dynamic as opposed to static processes or policy. Legislatively, we have major limitations.

A. Huge question. First there needs to be support and encouragement for a capacity for adaptive management. Managers have to be able to change on the fly if the template that informs the plan doesn't even apply to the current status. They clearly need the flexibility to respond to conditions and adapt to conditions that confront them. Limitations are also imposed by real or perceived attitudes of the general public. Some of the focus on ESA might pose risks to the larger ecosystem. Planning horizons constrain flexibility.

Q. How much do you think public perception is tuned into this and the impacts?

A. Depends on how vocal the people are and whether they see forest adaptation.

Q. Does the Climate Impacts Group see themselves as consultants who can have an effect, or is their material just heard without having any impact?

A. Group is encouraged by the response they've seen. Receptivity has been very good, and they're hopeful.

Q. Are most mitigation recommendations for Westside forests?

A. Mostly yes. For eastside, limiting crown fires could have big payoffs in most places. Increased rotations can help on both sides of the mountain range.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Visitor here to listen only.

SUBGROUP UPDATES

OHV – (Art Waugh) -No meeting held. At end of February, Art went out with Prineville staff to check suitability of some sites between Service Creek and Spray. People in Mitchell are looking at that for Class I and Class III. There may be kiddie-loop potential to train beginning riders. DSL lands are adjacent to part of it. Visual impacts of trails is undesirable for some areas, and neighboring private property limitations. Plant surveys are coming soon to see what can be designated. On the Umatilla transportation plan: they hope to get some info out to group leaders early, but it shouldn't be a big issue for the RAC, except the lack of Class II opportunities.

Q. Could RAC get a preliminary draft ahead of the June meeting?

A. Possible, but can't say for sure. Maybe subgroup could get it and work on it beforehand. The alternatives might be consolidated enough for the RAC to go over at their meeting.

By looking at the Umatilla material, the RAC may be better situated to the plan for the Wallowa-Whitman. The Wallowa-Whitman is developing alternatives right now, and counties have submitted their alternatives. Comment timing could be similar. Ochoco is doing their process differently.

Q. What is the RAC's role in comments and how is it used? Is it significant and valued in the planning process?

A. The RAC provides the Federal Officials with what they ask of us. The RAC submits a public comment, but it has the power of a group appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, so the RAC has time flexibilities and also represents a consensus thought-process. It carries added influence because of that. Managers gain by the discussion and the varied insights from the stakeholder groups, and it helps them refine the alternatives.

John Day Basin RMP – (Berta Youtie) – Met in Prineville in early January with David Moryc and Dan Forsea joining by phone. The new grazing matrix was the main topic. Set up meetings in February at Monument, John Day and Fossil to get input from ranchers and community members. Trying to get BLM set up for meetings with environmental groups in Bend. David is gone, so the RAC will need to sponsor it. Mark Webb is willing to take a part in this effort. Pat Dunham is also willing to serve with this subgroup. Adrienne sent climate change information to Ayn and Tina for consideration in the John Day Basin plan effort.

Motion by Dave Riley to appoint David Moryc to serve on the John Day Basin RMP subgroup; Mark Webb seconded the motion. No discussion – approved unanimously.

Q. Does the RAC want the letter that Adrienne is drafting regarding climate change to be specific to the John Day Plan, or toward planning in general?

A. Preference is for general application, but specific to the planning process, as it may affect the Baker, Umatilla, Wallowa Whitman, and Malheur

BLM Travel Management – (Adrienne Borgias) – No committee report. Per Dave: The eastside managers met with the State Director to review the RAC input and Ed gave them some work to do on it before they meet again to take action.

Noxious Weeds – (Berta Youtie) – Subgroup hasn't met since the last RAC meeting. BLM's national vegetation EIS is now complete, and they'll be doing a step-down for the Northwest. Per Dave: They've decided to do a programmatic regional effort, hopefully at an EA level, and have selected 21 herbicides for use. Not sure how to get the issue back in front of the court, but it will likely require being sued. DOJ sees this as the best avenue to move forward. Looking to accomplish all that by October 2010. People will be ready in the sub-regional areas so they can follow right behind the regional one (November or so), and be set to apply treatments in spring 2011.

Baker RMP – (Dave Henderson) – Things are moving rapidly; suggest the RAC get a briefing at on this topic at the next meeting.

Roundtable

Dave Riley - Nothing

Frank Bird - Nothing

Adrienne Borgias – Nothing

Kevin Martin – Umatilla invasive plant EIS is at draft final. Polishing the final product to release in early summer. They have tried to build in some flexibilities to deal with new or changed information with new listings or species. Hiring some people for the Blue Mountain Plan; expecting to have the new rule in place at any moment. Travel planning effort was covered by Tom this morning.

Working with W/W on Integrated Aquatic Strategy, recovery and planning process coming together or to completion. Recreation facilities analysis done, plan is in place, and the Forest got funding for some backlogged maintenance because they were ready. They could have more coming next year too. They're planning to submit some fee proposals to the Recreation RAC at next meeting. Got signs placed at all proposed areas during the fall, and didn't get huge response from the public. UNF is 100 years old in July. Celebrations set for June 28 in Pendleton at the Heritage Station Museum, and an open house on April 15 to mark a 6-month display period.

Steve Ellis – Shared newsletter on Wallowa-Whitman Travel Management. Now developing the suite of alternatives, and have received input from Wallowa and Baker Counties. Union County has not submitted anything yet. Received one from Hells Canyon Preservation group too. Assessing all of these in the draft EIS. Will hold public comment period and meetings once alternatives are out. Five counties have requested Cooperating Agency status, and the Forest is developing Memorandum of Understanding for those. CEQ rules require this documentation. Tribes are not interested in participating at this level. New Deputy FS – Betty Mathews, and they hope to have her at a RAC meeting soon. When the draft EIS is complete, Steve would love to have the RAC form a subgroup to review it (next winter). Oregonian will have another article about the Wood Butte Road issue; landowner (Hemstreet) has placed boulders in road, which violates legal right-of-way easement.

Noxious weeds EIS draft is targeted for release in June with a 45-day comment period. Steve has asked his specialists to meet with the tri-county weed people and OSU Extension Service. Forest has been ordered to develop Private Land Use Regulations for inholdings in Hells Canyon NRA. The Washington Office has requested action, so they will begin EIS for these 33,000 acres to comply with a court order. Not sure if the RAC will (or wants to be) involved.

The issue of fire retardant affecting fisheries has been in the news. It revolves around proper procedure to keep retardant out of fish-bearing streams. FS won the lawsuit, but it is being appealed.

Appropriate Management Response (AMR) will be their approach to future fires. Wallowa Whitman may be a pilot forest for this wildfire response. It may mean process changes to the wildfire analysis, so it might warrant discussion. OMB is pushing hard to reduce fire suppression costs, and have received some info indicating that suppression leads to further fire.

Mark Webb mentioned that Susan Jane Brown has legislation pending from DeFazio that will preclude any activity in previously disturbed landscapes, so salvage, new suppression, and other active management will be off-limits. NIFC is re-evaluating what is effective in suppression situations.

Co-conveners will be meeting on Blue Mountain Forest soon. Dave Schmidt is retiring soon.

Phil Shephard – Nothing

Mike Hayward – Sawmill closures in Eastern Oregon will continue. Part of that is the current lumber market, and transport costs are also a factor. There may be a snowball effect, as closure of one will limit supply to others. This has huge impacts on local economies.

Ayn Schlisky – Draft plan for the John Day Basin has been through the State Office review, and goes to DC in a week. Anticipate public release about mid-July, with comments due by mid-October. Will have at least five public meetings during that time, and RAC members are welcome to attend and have whatever involvement level they choose. Key issues coming out of the plan surround travel management, so having the strategy in place will help the John Day Basin. Meetings with grazing permittees did not evoke a lot of concerns; mostly localized questions. Budgeting process has been instructive, and they've proposed using lessons-learned to assist the Baker RMP as their effort goes forward. Proposing AMR to deal with fire suppression, and they're interested in how climate change considerations could affect that. Staffing shifts at Prineville are underway to meet 2010 organization limits, which is having an impact throughout the District. With office renovations, people have been displaced to new, smaller quarters.

Berta Youtie – Nothing.

John Tanaka – SRM will be releasing a special issue about climate change effects on rangelands. Supposed to have several good articles, and John may be able to get a copy for RAC review. "Hire on the Spot" programs through FS, BLM, and NRCS have been used at the large gatherings, so students can be hired by agencies – the next one is February in Albuquerque. Training costs are becoming prohibitive, so they're looking to have trainers go to areas instead of the larger number of attendees coming to training centers.

Dave Henderson – Distributed a written report on District activities. Two other issues for heads-up: sage grouse data call is out there right now, to update the status from 2004 to present; and a fee increase is proposed at the Oregon Trail Center. Feedback ranges from resisting because they already pay taxes to the recognition that the facility is worth more than the cost of a cup of coffee.

Terri Drever-Gee – Focus on finding solutions instead of beating up on everyone.

Bill Lang – Nothing

Carole Holly – Malheur is seeing many personnel changes. Stan Benes is moving on, Cassius Cash will be Acting Forest Supervisor, and the new Forest Sup, Doug Gochnour, will be coming from the Boise NF on May 26. New Deputy Forest Sup is Teresa Raaf. Malheur has many similar issues to the Umatilla and W/W; they're working together with them on weeds. Malheur is also 100 years old in June 2008. Getting new Rangers: Jerry Hensley at Emigrant Creek and Elaine Kohrman at Prairie City.

Pat Dunham – Seeing the processes of the RAC is very impressive. If the public knew the expertise, there would be a greater appreciation of the efforts. Public-at-Large is an interesting category to get input from, but the people he's talked to have mentioned hunting and fishing, and their perspectives are mixed. Global warming came up as topic in family discussion.

Art Waugh – Nothing

Mark Webb - Nothing.

ADJOURN BUSINESS MEETING at 3:05 pm

*****ACTION ITEM: (STATE WHAT & WHO)**

Pam Robbins will verify the process for subgroup appointments of non-members.

Dave Henderson will add Mark Webb and Pat Dunham to the John Day Basin RMP subgroup, and remove David Moryc from the Travel Management subgroup.

Adrienne Borgias will prepare a draft letter regarding the need to consider climate change in the planning process, for review before next meeting.

RAC determine how they want to get involved on the Umatilla Travel Management EIS, since the comment period ends between RAC meetings?

Consider having a fire ecologist in to discuss the situation and options.

Agenda items:

AMR – Fire ecologist

Weeds

W/W Weed EIS

New timeline on NE Forests

Malheur weed EIS in fall

Approved as written:

RAC Chair

Acting Designated Federal Officer