

***John Day Snake
Resource Advisory Council
John Day, OR
Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2008- Business Meeting***

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

RAC members not present: John Tanaka, Frank Bird, Robert Parker

Quorum: Was not reached

RAC Federal Official Attendees: Dave Henderson, Debbie Henderson-Norton, Kevin Martin, Ayn Schlisky, Doug Gochnour, Betty Matthews, Anna Smith, Jennifer Harris, Mike Montgomery

Presenters: Tom Mafera, Chris Knauf, Paul Boehne,

Visitors: Gene Stackle

Designated Federal Official: Dave Henderson

RAC Vice-Chair: Berta Youtie

Notetaker: Pam Robbins

Facilitator: Mark Wilkening

Meeting Called to Order/Introductions-Berta Youtie, Vice-Chair

Travel voucher/Update Roster/

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

Bureau of Land Management

c/o Sally Hall

100 Oregon Street

Vale, Oregon 97918

Because of the changeover of BLM's financial system, the District will pay room costs directly for this meeting instead of reimbursing individual members.

RAC Business Update-Dave Henderson

DFO Dave Henderson welcomed everyone and thanked Doug Gochnour, new Malheur National Forest Supervisor for hosting us. Dave informed everyone about Financial Business Management System blackout period, so the District corporate card will be used to pay lodging costs. There will be a significant delay for reimbursement of per diem expenses and mileage during this fiscal changeover, so reimbursement payments might not arrive until January.

Status of Baker RMP – Todd Kuck

There have been nine meetings held so far, scattered through the Resource Management Planning area. The briefing document shows results of those meetings, the expected timeline, contact information, reference to website, and status. The District was funded in 2008 to begin revision of the RMP. Some

hiring has been done for workers focusing specifically on the RMP. Managers have consulted with three of the tribes and have met with the County Commissioners. The Field Office will complete the Analysis of the Management Situation soon so they can begin writing alternatives. AMS expected to be printed at the start of 2009. Most frequent public issues that surfaced were energy, travel, access, land tenure, and recreation. A total of 264 comments were received.

Q. Were invasive species a topic?

A. Yes. That was brought up three times in comments.

Q. Did anyone ask about stewardship contracting?

A. Yes. Gene Stackle would like a copy of the information they have so far.

Q. What role would Baker like the RAC to play?

A. The subgroup is the place they want to start; there is a specific list of questions they would like to look at first: grazing/range management, energy development, and recreation management.

Q. Could the RAC get a calendar of the times their input would be required so they can plan their meetings around those points?

A. Yes.

******ACTION Todd to send Gene Stackle a copy of the information they have so far on Stewardship Contracting.***

******ACTION Baker RMP planning team to provide a calendar of the appropriate times for the RAC to give feedback in the planning process.***

Energy Rights-of-Way – Todd Kuck

There are six primary projects/proposals that the office is currently looking at. Each is at a different stage of exploration for feasibility and approval. BLM's role is providing information the companies need and determining rights-of-way and permit requirements. The lead BLM office is not always the Vale District; some are being processed through Idaho, and some are national in scope. If RAC members are interested in specific projects/routes, Vale will provide the information. Some of it is already online, and they're beta-testing systems to make the rest available. Powerlines will shift some of the energy load between existing transmission lines to make room for what's generated on the wind energy projects. BLM is heavily involved with FERC issues on Hells Canyon Complex and the Thief Valley addition of hydropower turbines. New proposals are coming in for wind energy projects, and some include funding to get the planning work done.

Q. What's the current situation with the Hells Canyon relicensing?

A. Still moving. IPC recently acquired Daly Creek ranch as part of their mitigation package.

Q. How many wind developments are operational right now on BLM lands?

A. None operating right now. There is growing pressure to get some of these placed on public lands, so Districts are moving to respond. Many new project proposals have been submitted, but they were unexpected, so there was no budget in place to process them. Many things to consider, and the staffing and expertise needs to be directed to these areas.

Q. Did wind come up as a topic in the Baker RMP scoping?

A. Energy development was the top item in public comments. Staff had to address it a lot during the Baker scoping meeting, with concerns about visual impacts and other questions.

COMMENT: We will see a lot of these major energy projects coming forward, and the RAC may need an energy sub-group to look at the activity and the impact. In next year's RAC scheduling, we may want to have a representative of one of the energy companies attend to answer the RAC's questions. There will be public forums, and we may be able to have a guest speaker. Many questions need to be considered about the amount of energy generated, the capacity to transmit it across the grid, the impact on wildlife, and the potential to bridge power gaps.

******ACTION Terry will contact Todd to see if he has additional information on the energy topic that would help the RAC as they review it.***

******ACTION Mark will get information from Todd and send website info to RAC members for each of the energy projects as they come online. (Boardman to Hemingway transmission line project, Sunstone gas pipeline project, Lime Wind)***

Umatilla Access and Travel Management Planning - Tom Mafera

Tom is District Ranger for Heppner Ranger District. The process launched from the 2005 travel rule to designate specific roads and trails for access/use. Looked at each of four Districts on the Umatilla and designated their routes individually. East side of Heppner had routes, but West end needed to be done. Went out to the public to get comments at Fossil, Monument and Heppner and gave the opportunity for comments by all interested people. After 18 months, they sent out the proposed action, taking into account the public input. The 91,000 acres included in this travel plan are located in three counties. The designated OHV area in Morrow County has grown from 2,000 to 11,000 users in a couple years. The OHV park has designated trails, and some of them lead off the park and into forest lands. For more than 15 years, the Forest's roads have been open with un-designated use.

There were about two dozen attendees at each of the public meetings. Alternative 2 is what they went to the public with, that considered the emergent issues: stream sedimentation, steelhead habitat, archaeological sites, resource considerations, and public preferences. Class I vehicles are typical OHV, Class II are broader like dune-buggies, etc, and Class III are motorcycles. The Forest would retain the 189 miles of designated roads, with 80 miles of designated trails remaining open for Class I and Class III. They wanted to maintain connections to the OHV park, and reduce use conflicts between OHV and regular vehicular traffic. Seasonal closures were proposed for habitat needs. This would close the undesignated parts of the Forest to vehicle use. The 300-foot right-of-way may be set based on topographic realities or patterns of use. Monitoring will indicate to the Forest if they need to adjust this use. After looking at green-dot systems and other mechanisms of managing use, they think this will be successful. The plans give the flexibility to take corrective measures if unforeseen use requires that. The Forest Service requires printing a new map every year, and users must have current map to be legal.

They got input from recreational riders, hunters, wildlife agencies, and those who want consistency across the Forest. Range of alternatives varies based on the feedback from those groups and their highest priorities. Most of the alternatives do not have cross-country travel. Forest is not doing a draft EIS, but an EA. They're not ready to issue anything yet, but working on the effects analysis right now. Hope to have the draft EA on the street sometime in October. When the 30-day comment period closes in November, they will compile all responses, and hope to issue the final by the end of 2008. Working through the environmental analysis, they will see if anything has to be elevated to a higher level of analysis.

Q. When measuring usage, does the Forest have a way to track demographics of the users?

A. Not really. There is local use, but there a number of users that come from metropolitan areas in the region.

Q. Was there much controversy in the public meetings?

A. There was some unhappiness initially with the idea of setting rules for use, but after viewing the proposed action and their own patterns of use, they saw that this might not be a huge change for the public. Because there have been designated routes on the rest of the Forest and they haven't had problems with it, they seemed to accept the change.

Q. Any sense of cost-per-mile costs for maintenance?

A. Not really. The Forest needs to do an analysis of it.

Q. How many of the routes are in draw bottoms or areas that would affect steelhead, etc?

A. Did not bring a topo map, but there are several drainages that are listed for steelhead. The initial proposal took the stream-bottom roads out of the alternatives, and they were not added back in because of the resource impact.

Q. Why an EA instead of an EIS? Will this open the Forest to lawsuits?

A. They think the EA is appropriate for this plan, because it is based on another NEPA document. It appears to be a lesser effect, and unless new information changes it, it is likely to be a finding of no significant impact.

Q. What is the likely total cost of this effort? Average total cost?

A. For 2008 they have budgeted \$85,000. Prior to that, they worked with a small public group in regular course of business, at minimal cost. Complete EIS averages about \$150,000. On the Forest overall, they are preparing the new maps and this decision will be included in the new Forest map.

Q. Would it be possible to include the OHV Class designations for each use area, so that Class II users can easily tell which trails they could use and which areas are off-limits?

A. They recognize there is a need for this, and will try to get this information included for the public comment period.

Q. Have fuel prices affected use and been factored into the planning process?

A. It's difficult to get hard data on this. District is tracking with the OHV park, and that may give them a better sensing of visitor use. Forests in this region are starting a new visitor monitoring effort which will also give them better data.

Q. Has the Forest already closed/signed these roads to reduce the use numbers?

A. Yes. Over time they may need to make adjustments, which will reflect on the annual map changes.

Q. Does the OHV subgroup want to gather and make their comments on this EA?

A. It might be better to do individual comments but indicate that each person is a RAC member.

COMMENT: Debbie Henderson-Norton suggested noting the creeks and streams on the map so that users can tell where they are and the reasons for avoiding specific areas. In response, there is a national template for Forest Service maps, and they do not contain amenity information. On the national scale, the task force is hearing this need being expressed, and they're looking at revising the template.

COMMENT: Debbie Henderson-Norton noted that snowpack affected OHV usage in central Oregon. With Forests snowed in, there was greater use on BLM land.

BLM Vegetation Treatments EIS - Dave Henderson

Planning team is moving right along. Scoping included Portland, Salem, Eugene, Medford, and all eastside Districts. There was minimal interest expressed, but now the planning team can begin moving forward. Five alternatives range from no herbicide to using all 18 that were identified in the national EIS. There is an alternative for non-commodity treatment, but does not include grazing or timber production. A group of folks will be coming in to do the write-up of effects during the fall. The hope is to have a draft plan on the streets by June 2009. The RAC may want to look at programming this into the 2009 agenda when we set the schedule in December. BLM is working closely with the main stakeholders to get constructive input. Berta brought up the issues that arose at the Prineville scoping meeting; include some potential herbicides that are not on the list of 18, but the risk assessment has not been done, so they can't be used. Beyond herbicides, there was a concern that restoration could help, and that did not seem like it was part of the consideration in the EIS. After treatment, the lack of restoration leaves the land open for other invasive plants if the land is not rehabilitated.

Q. Do we need someone to step forward and sue?

A. No; that shouldn't be a problem.

Q. What is the timeline for this? Private landowners are concerned that infestations on federal lands pose a risk to their own land.

A. Draft is set for next summer, final ROD in March 2010. Likely immediate appeals, and it's tiered from the national plan; District plans will follow quickly after the statewide plan is issued. We could conceivably be using these chemicals in Spring 2011.

Q. Is there cooperation with the State of Oregon?

A. Yes. They've been good partners.

COMMENT: The technical expertise needed to make specific comments on the EIS is limited, so that's probably why there was such minimal comment.

BLM Travel Management Update - Chris Knauf

ID Team with RAC and BLM did a lot of the prep work. Issues that affected the work included IM's and Executive Orders, and the National OHV strategy. Other factors include the Land Use Planning handbook, Comprehensive Travel Management guidance, and the Mountain Bike strategy that is in development. The team looked at overall travel management, BLM's open areas, a road and trail

inventory, the rule sets for desired condition, our partnerships, and interpretation that informs the public about allowed use and landscape features. They looked at the unique values of the Oregon landscape that were important during preliminary scoping, and the OHV designations that would best provide for them. If BLM considered changes to open areas, the team needed to identify the biggest impacts, which included big game retrieval, county transportation needs, right-of-way, casual use, weed management, etc.

In Oregon, there is new policy direction, and new RMP's in Eastern Oregon will address travel. Interim travel networks could be used. BLM wants the RAC's input on alternatives. The RAC can also help with extended scoping and public comment periods, consultation with counties & transportation planners, outreach to user groups, full inventory of roads & trails. The likely timeline is one-three years.

Internal scoping was done to complete a database of our travel system. Most districts are at about 85% of inventory completed on open and limited roads; Prineville is at 70-80%. Trails inventory varies much more, from between 45% and 90%. The Prineville District has much less open acreage because of earlier designations and the smaller size of district.

We've seen that there is a strong local need for OHV recreation areas, and BLM's tools to complete inventory are not uniform, so that has to be addressed. It should be relatively easy to get the hardware reconfigured so that the data recorded on different districts is compatible.

Q. Will the travel management plan consider data that's already in the RMPs?

A. Yes.

Q. What timeline can we expect?

A. There are several issues that complicate this: ONDA challenged the Southeast Oregon plan, and the District Court found for BLM. The 9th Circuit Court took a different view. Court findings about wilderness character were a narrow segment, but held up implementation of the entire plan, and has implications for Lakeview and other plans. DOJ has asked that we be allowed to implement the aspects of the plan that are not specifically tied to "wilderness character." Completing the travel management plan is held up because the funds are tied up with responding to the court challenge to the Southeast Oregon RMP.

Q. Does it matter that BLM is doing an EIS and the Forest Service is doing an EA?

A. BLM's effort affects much more land, and we know there will be significant impacts, so it warrants an EIS to cover the territory.

COMMENT: Sometimes you can avoid bumps in the road down the line if things are addressed early. By taking current and expected use into consideration beforehand, you are better equipped to take specific management actions. Cline Buttes as example.

Forest Aquatics Program - Paul Boehne

Lower Snake Basin Aquatic Restoration Strategy was an avenue for Region 6 to maximize financial resources to combine watershed funding, fisheries funding, and engineering dollars. To get the most done, in 2005 they zoned the strategy to key watershed basins. Many issues converged at the same time to prompt this strategy to get resources to the key priority areas. Lower Snake includes the Tucannon, Asotin, Grand Ronde and other key tributaries. There are Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman Forests and some BLM lands in that Lower Snake basin. The objective was to increase the allocation

of resources into restoring the entire watershed. Methods to achieve it had to look at current “drivers,” existing restoration programs, staffing, partners, etc.

The biggest driver was the biological opinion on the Snake River dams about viability of Chinook salmon, and what habitat actions are ongoing. The large gap between the expected return of fish and the census of returning fish is being reviewed by Judge Redden, including short-term habitat actions and those tiered to future years. The judge will also look at other impacts to fish survival, including estuarine health, dams, in-stream harvest, etc. With salmon recovery planning and national and regional emphasis, his decision is looking at all risks to fish.

The Forest Service Chief is looking specifically at water, and landscape resiliency, emphasizing native fish recovery. At the Forest level, their strategies cover passive and active restoration actions. The Forests are coordinating with the John Day Basin planning, existing opportunities for projects, and interagency collaboration as BLM moves their plans forward. The Regional Office supports the strategy, and has designated an interim strategy coordinator (Kurt Wiedenmann) who works closely with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). The Forest Service is identifying a Basin Coordinator for the Lower Snake, and also cataloguing the skills and expertise that are in place now, looking at additional staff that can add to the effort, and considering the capacity to use contracting, TEAMS, partners, and tribes. Sub-basin plans are being used to feed the overall plan, and are tiered by each Forest’s priorities of 5th field watersheds. Forests are relying on internal and external partnerships to accomplish the work, with some funding assistance from BPA. These monies are on a 10-year funding path, and can help with intra- and inter-Forest coordination, engineering staff work, and aquatics staff expertise. Within the next five years, BPA could allocate \$10-12 million per year to complete these projects. External partners include tribes, watershed councils and boards, NGO’s, and other federal and state partners.

The BiOp funding was 2008-2009, and reasonably certain to occur. Tribal MOA’s and State Programs are being put into place, and those provide other future options.

Q. How is the Forest using the partners? Are they in concurrence with the Forests’ plans for restoration?

A. On several fronts they are collaborating. The Grand Ronde Model Watershed has members from partner groups. The communication between all the entities avoids duplication of effort and helps to prioritize the highest value projects first. The partnerships were already in place, but with the time limitations to accomplish specific required actions, it is crucial to coordinate so they avoid overlap and can move quickly.

Q. How much of the work is on Forest land and what share will be off-Forest?

A. Current action is specifically on the two Forests (and possibly BLM). This funding will offset the costs of planning, but communities will have to step forward to provide equipment and labor to get the work done on the ground.

Q. Is there a role for the RAC in this process?

A. There will likely be one. Reporting to the RAC on the results and outcomes will be useful so the RAC can help shape the criteria and priorities. The RAC could address a letter to the Forests recommending specific future activities or options to BPA.

Q. Does the Forest have any information about back-channel Fish & Wildlife conversations?

A. No.

COMMENT: The December meeting might include an update on this Lower Snake Strategy.

Wallowa-Whitman Weed EIS – Betty Matthews

Betty introduced herself, and gave some background of their weed EIS issue and the RAC's participation. The Regional Office had some concerns about the effects analysis that was done, so the planned timeline has been delayed. The Wallowa-Whitman (W/W) hoped to have it ready for public release by now, but the date is now more likely to be December. There are about 25,000 acres on forest that are known risk areas. The Forest has 10 herbicides they can use, and plan to address the problem using these tools once the EIS is complete. The Subcommittee will report to the entire RAC at the December meeting, and compile their comments for the full RAC to discuss and decide on final comments. Weeds have been identified as a huge issue, so there is budget backing even if Title II funding is eliminated.

Update on W/W Travel Management: They developed six alternatives in response to the scoping. Counties have signed Cooperating Agency MOU's on this issue, mostly to deal with socio-economic issues. The Forest is hoping for implementation in 2010. Most of the substantive public comments are included somewhere within the alternatives. The draft EIS will hopefully be available to the public in March 2009.

Q. The MOU with Counties was portrayed in local news as limiting the County's right to sue. Is that right?

A. No. At the end of the process, if the County doesn't agree with findings, there is no limit on their right to sue.

Q. Is the vehicle width listed in the newsletter a typo?

A. Yes.

******ACTION Mark will let Betty know how many hard copies and how many disks of the Weeds EIS that the RAC needs.***

******ACTION: Betty will try to provide an update for the RAC on the schedule for the Travel Management plan before the December meeting so they can decide how it fits into the agenda.***

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Gene Stackle, Baker Economic Development Manager spoke to the RAC. He is in that job for the past eight months, and was glad to sit in on the morning meeting to see the many resources that the RAC is involved with. The Economic team consists of Steve Mercado, Jennifer Watkins, Jake Jacobs, and Gene, and their focus is business development, retention, recruitment, and expansion. There is more to economic development than bringing jobs into a community to boost the tax base. Businesses require assistance on a broad spectrum of topics and arenas. He would like to offer his services to the RAC and be able to ask the RAC for help as well. There is infrastructure for a new pellet plant in Baker County, but no raw materials at this point in time. Trying to bring all the strands together is the goal of the Baker Economic Development group, and much of that is tied to resources in the region. Jobs and biomass and economic development and community stability are interlaced. Gene has been involved with retail and small business from the beginning, with current big efforts done through the Baker Enterprise Growth Initiative.

John Day RMP Update - Ayn Shlisky

The draft RMP is at the printer. It should be out by the end of October. Public comments are due around the end of November, with the Record of Decision out in 2009. Thanks to everyone for coming out on the field trip. The plan efforts are on a short pause so they can address wind energy opportunities. They have the grazing matrix prepared, and between the draft and final they would like a balanced group to look it over and make any needed refinements. Will there be potential future events that could make a difference on future grazing allocations? Maybe the RAC could sponsor a meeting of a broad spectrum of stakeholders to look it over and provide feed back. There are five public meetings scheduled, probably mid-November (before Thanksgiving).

Q. How would the agency want that review of the matrix to be orchestrated?

A. Dave Moryc had started to organize a series of meetings that could make this happen. The team is open to suggestions. It might be possible to tag these on after one or more of the public meetings in November.

COMMENT: The RAC tried to have some of these meetings, but didn't really have a turnout for them. A non-RAC subcommittee would not be a logical vehicle because of the complexities and elongated time-frame of establishing a subcommittee. It might be possible for the County Court to host something. Mark Webb commented that the Feds have done as good a job as could be expected on this effort. He's impressed!

******ACTION Mark Webb and Ayn Shlisky to work together to host a gathering of interested people to review the matrix, to assure that there are no built-in biases.***

Climate Change in Federal Planning – Adrienne Borgias

The subgroup has drafted a letter for the RAC's consideration. It has been reviewed by the Climatologist who presented material at the last RAC meeting. The finalized letter would be sent to the Secretaries of the Agriculture Department and the Department of the Interior. Before the letter is finalized, the subgroup wants to make sure that RAC is together on the concepts. When discussion is finished, the letter will be redrafted.

Q. What prompted this topic to come before the RAC?

A. The fact that BLM has not had direction for planning efforts to consider climate change in their plan documents.

COMMENT: Bill Lang wants to have the RAC decide whether to weigh in on this topic. If they can reach a consensus on this topic, it could have a significant impact, because this is an issue being raised from the ground up as well as those areas where it has been raised from the top down.

Ayn Shlisky thought it would be helpful for the RAC to have the most current policies for each agency, and more specific examples by community level or resource topic. Dave suggests that the subgroup be given the most recent policy for both agencies so the letter can be refined to recognize current policy and be specific about potential impacts that should be addressed in each plan.

Mark Webb emphasized the need to look to the future as well as historic past impacts. Historic events and trends may not apply to current situation if climate scientists theories are correct, so the plans should be prospective.

Ayn pointed out that quantifying greenhouse gas emissions might be tough to do; methane from grazing vs. carbon sequestration of juniper, or other examples of climate change impacts are complicated to measure and to cite objectively.

The Forest Service recognizes that their management activities have a role in climate change. There are researchers looking into the methods to evaluate it, and then planners have to figure out how they will address it.

Terry Drever-Gee looks at this as an issue that has the potential to be very expensive and there isn't certainty about the direction to move. Big changes could have big impact on communities that are already struggling, so any actions the agencies take should be fully considered.

*****ACTION** *Members get specific comments on the letter to Adrienne by the end of October.*

*****ACTION** *Mark to put climate change on the December agenda*

*****ACTION** *Adrienne to have the revised letter to Mark before November 5*

*****ACTION** *Betty Matthews to send the Forest Service climate change policy to Adrienne*

*****ACTION** *Dave Henderson to verify whether the BLM's draft climate policy can be shared outside the agency yet*

SUBGROUP UPDATES

***OHV Subgroup – No real activity until the John Day plan is issued. When the Baker RMP is issued, Virtue Flat will probably be the biggest issue.**

***JD Basin RMP Subgroup – Draft will be out in November, and there is a RAC meeting December 2. Subgroup would like an early copy if possible, to give them time to review. If it's available on CD-ROM, Ayn might be able to get copies to the subgroup members. Potential date for subgroup to discuss would be week of November 17. Hope to schedule a conference call at 7:00 pm on Nov 17. Members of the planning team to join the call at 8:00.**

***BLM Travel Management Subgroup – No activity beyond Chris' report**

***Noxious Weed Subgroup – They need to review the Wallowa-Whitman weed plan after they get copies of it. The comments would not likely be really different from what they've already shared.**

***Baker RMP Subgroup – Group met today, and talked with Todd. The subgroup suggested that he may want to consider the matrix developed by the Prineville District for the John Day Basin. The subgroup decided that they would like to take on the energy development portion of the Baker RMP. They would meet in conjunction with the December meeting.**

*****ACTION** *Mark Wilkening to arrange for a conference call (2 1/2 hour duration) on November 17, 2008 at 7:00 pm for discussion of the John Day Basin draft, followed by discussion of the Baker RMP.*

Roundtable

Bill Lang – Nothing

Mark Webb - Nothing

Todd Kuck- Nothing

Pat Dunham – There is increased public concern about wind towers and transmission lines in NE Oregon. There have been many letters to the editor and much greater visibility. Pat continues to be impressed with the variety and depth of planning the RAC is involved with.

Mike Hayward – One of the area sawmills has closed permanently, others are scaled back or closing. There will likely be more mill closures, as lumber prices are bad and hauling costs are rising. The small communities are being hurt economically at every level. Litigation is bringing everything to a halt. In the forest plans, are these impacts being considered?

Terri Drever-Gee – She was interviewed for the BLM's socio-economic assessment. She pointed out to the pollster that the people on the ground are working hard to make things functional, but at the WO level, there needs to be a better understanding of situations on the ground.

Betty Matthews – The Forest is still on schedule for their plan. Dave Schmidt will be retiring December 3rd, and Katie Countryman is the interim person. Recreation site improvement monies gave them about \$500,000 for infrastructure investment. Accessibility was a focal point, but many campgrounds have gotten upgrades from that funding. They anticipate coming close to their timber targets this year. The Mt. Emily stewardship project is soon to be awarded. They had a better fire season this year, with duration and size of fires not as severe. The hunting season poses the greatest current risk for wildfire.

Q. Have fuel treatments helped?

A. Not so much that they could measure – lightning is usually their biggest threat and they were lucky in having less of that this year.

Berta Youtie – Many issues, so will pass since she can't pick one.

Dave Henderson – We've been fortunate over the past several years with LWCF funds and willing sellers to bring key habitat into federal management. Berta and Dave met recently with Fish and Wildlife Service about what's next for birds in this area. The decision about listing is expected by December: whether warranted, unwarranted, or some other designation. A listing could be by population segment instead of range-wide. Having the decision before year-end will be helpful for managing the resource.

Ayn Schlisky – Nothing

Art Waugh – Governor's "Oregon's Vision for Federal Forests" would be worth reviewing. The RAC might want to pick up one or more of the issues. The DSL in-lieu selection might be a RAC topic.

Kevin Martin – The RAC may want to make sure the Blue Mountain Forest plan is on the spring agenda. The Tupper Fire & Fuels camp yielded seven students for crews this year. Tom Mafera is the lead. The next camp is scheduled for Oct 18-22, and RAC members are invited to visit and talk with students. That schedule allows the football players to participate in both activities. The Forest is making adjustments to their plan based on the review for the Wallowa-Whitman's. They expect to have theirs out by late Spring/early Summer. Looking at big fuels treatment in the Desolation Creek area. October 20 is the end of the comment period on that EIS; activities include thinning, prescribed fire, and {didn't catch this}. Starting another large project at Tollgate (Milton-Freewater to Elgin). Sent 600 mailings, and are holding a public meeting on September 17 to talk about the issues and needs related to fuels treatment there. Kevin has copies for RAC members that are interested in commenting. There is now a wolf pack on the Forest; in Union County. Biologists have not been able to trap them yet to add radio collars. Have small moose population on the north half of the Forest; they probably came from Idaho or Washington.

Debbie Henderson-Norton – There will be mandatory use permits on the John Day River to keep within acceptable limits of change. Use figures are much higher than previous years, and far exceed the number of users they expected on all segments. Prineville District will be working with

whoever is interested on this project. Greatest public feedback is that it's about time we managed river use more strategically. Sen. Wyden is working with them on Spring Basin legislation. They might be looking at more interagency cooperation with their 10-year fuel strategy plan. One of the highest priorities is the Cline Buttes area, and the decision on that should be ready to sign by October 1. Includes fuels component, travel management component and {didn't catch this} component. Prineville was not spared on fire activity like the W/W. There are many areas without fire protection districts, and the expectation is that BLM comes to put out the fire. They are looking closely at the boundaries and coverages for fire protection across several of the areas, designating the appropriate partner.

They've had many retirements and moves on the District, so lots of folks are taking on new duties. Some positions have been advertised so new folks could be coming. They are also exploring a partnership with Wolfree and the Crook County Schools for getting young people outdoors and funding projects to help them learn about public lands.

Q. Do we know why usage is so much higher on the John Day?

A. Not sure.

Q. Why does the Warm Springs Tribe have such a say on the John Day management?

A. Results from previous lawsuit. There is a website on this project with all the background information and status.

Q. On Spring Basin exchanges, how is that land being evaluated? People are calling Grant County to ask about how the lands are being appraised, and they don't have all the answers..

A. An independent appraiser who has been acceptable to the landowners and is on the approved list of licensed professionals for BLM has set the values.

Q. How is the funding acquired through Wolfree?

A. Not exactly sure, but it is probably part of the Take it Outside initiative.

Adrienne Borgias – The Eastern Washington RAC had a large conversation about getting information to the RAC in time for them to be able to comment on it. She's grateful that this RAC is getting information more timely. They discussed an OHV loop and sage grouse, as well as an area that is used for target practice, with varied input.

Doug Gochmour – The Malheur contact information is very outdated. He handed out new info for the RAC members. On the Egley fire salvage, they have been very busy getting roadside salvage prepped for sale. The Thorn settlement happened just before Doug arrived in May, and it was exciting to have potential litigation resolved instead of being tied up in court for a long time. The Malheur already has their travel plan in place, and do not anticipate doing NEPA as they prepare the maps. The new rules allow maps to show roads, trails and areas. There is some cross-country travel that has not posed problems, so they see little point in regulating it at this time. Monitoring does not show much sign of people leaving the roads to travel cross country. If the monitoring begins to show any resource damage, the Forest can adjust closures. Over the last six-weeks, they've lost \$2 million of their budget for fire transfer, and can expect a 6-8% reduction for the next couple years. He's optimistic about stewardship contracting opportunities, but the Forest is being hit by grazing lawsuits. Each day that range conservationists are doing paperwork for lawsuits is a day they cannot monitor for range health.

Dan Forsea - Asked when the Baker RMP subgroup was formed, and if he's on it. Answer is he's not on it yet – RAC is giving him the opportunity to volunteer. He wants to participate. Also had a question:

Q. *There is concern about the horses being released onto public and private lands as owners get into financial difficulties. Are we seeing this yet?*

A. *The managers haven't seen huge numbers yet. There is no market for horses that people can no longer afford to feed, and no local slaughterhouses. There are many unbranded horses, and Oregon law doesn't have policies about branded horses either. John O'Keefe with Oregon Cattlemen's Association is working to find a way to deal with this.*

Dave Riley - Nothing

Phil Shephard – *Working with Wallowa County to acquire 6,000 acres in the lower Imnaha. Some other lands being considered were more appropriate to remain in private holding. There is high quality habitat there for fish and plants, and it looks like that acquisition will close at year end. Nature Conservancy will work with the Forest Service to purchase that parcel over time. Access was a big concern over this long process, so the purchase should help.*

Pam Robbins – *Member nominations awaiting Secretarial approval.*

Mark Wilkening – *The RAC Handbook has some outdated material. As Facilitator, he requests the Districts and Forests please update their contact lists and other appropriate material so the RAC members have the most useful tools..*

REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS

*****ACTION** *Todd to send Gene Stackle a copy of the information they have so far on Stewardship Contracting.*

*****ACTION** *Baker RMP planning team to provide a calendar of the appropriate times for the RAC to give feedback in the planning process.*

*****ACTION** *Terry will contact Todd to see if he has additional information on the energy topic that would help the RAC as they review it.*

*****ACTION** *Mark will get information from Todd and send website info to RAC members for each of the energy projects as they go online.*

*****ACTION** *Mark Wilkening will let Betty know how many hard copies and how many disks of the Weeds EIS that the RAC needs.*

*****ACTION:** *Betty Matthews will try to provide an update for the RAC on the schedule for the Travel Management plan before the December meeting so they can decide how it fits into the agenda.*

*****ACTION** *Mark Webb and Ayn Shlisky to work together to host a gathering of interested people to review the matrix, to assure that there are no built-in biases.*

*****ACTION** *All members to get their specific comments on the climate letter to Adrienne by the end of October.*

*****ACTION** *Mark Wilkening to include climate change on the December agenda*

*****ACTION** *Adrienne Borgias to revise the climate letter and send to Mark Wilkening before November 5*

*****ACTION** *Betty Matthews to send the Forest Service climate change policy to Adrienne Borgias*

*****ACTION** *Dave Henderson to verify whether the BLM's draft climate policy can be shared outside the agency yet*

******ACTION Mark Wilkening to arrange for a conference call (2 ½ hour duration) on November 17, 2008 at 7:00 pm for discussion of the John Day Basin draft, followed by discussion of the Baker RMP.***

***Next Meeting Agenda Items/Meeting
December 2, Pendleton***

Agenda items:

Restoration of the Lower Snake

Plan program of work for FY 09

Comment on the W.W weed EIS

More comprehensive update of the W/W Travel plan

John Day RMP

Follow-up on the John Day RMP

West End Travel Management

ADJOURN BUSINESS MEETING at 3:20 pm

Approved as written:

RAC Chair

Designated Federal Official