

**John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
May 3, 2011- The Dalles, OR**

**Business Meeting RAC Attendees:**

CATEGORY 1		CATEGORY 2		CATEGORY 3	
X	Adriane Borgias	X	Aaron Killgore	X	Jeanne Burch
X	Terry Drever-Gee	X	Bill Lang	X	Patrick Dunham
	Dan Forsea	X	Dave Riley	X	Craig Ely
X	Mike Hayward	X	Tim Unterwegner	X	Patricia Gainsforth
X	Art Waugh	X	Berta Youtie		Vacant

**Quorum: YES**

**RAC Federal Official Attendees:**

AGENCY	MANAGER		AGENCY	MANAGER	
BLM Prineville	X	Debbie Henderson-Norton	Ochoco NF		
BLM Vale	X	Don Gonzalez	Umatilla NF	X	Kevin Martin
Malheur NF	X	Darren Lemon (Actg)	Wallowa-Whitman NF	X	Monica Schwalbach

**Presenters:** Amy Burt, John Mosher, Alison Kuehl, Meagan Conry, Chris Mitchell

**Visitors:** None

**Designated Federal Official:** Debbie Henderson-Norton

**RAC Chair:** Berta Youtie

**Notetaker:** Pam Robbins

**Facilitator:** Mark Wilkening

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**Meeting Called to Order - Berta Youtie, Chairman**

Called to order at 8:05 a.m.

**DFO Welcome – Debbie Henderson-Norton**

**Agenda Review:** Minor changes on planning effort presenters.

**Military Training Facility John Mosher**

Several levels of military represented for today’s presentation. The US Navy and Oregon National Guard share interests in this site, for ongoing readiness. Site is located south of I-84, three miles south of Boardman, Oregon, west of the Umatilla Army Depot, and includes military airspace. Historic use since 1941 has been gunnery and aerial bombing. Infrequent practice bombing continues on a smaller size parcel. The last bomb was dropped in a training event in 2006. Proposed action supports current and emerging military readiness activities, for baseline activities and use of new technologies which require restricted airspace.

There is a no-change alternative and two others. All military ranges are being analyzed nationally, so that's the reason for the current EIS. Boardman is a crucial site for the Oregon National Guard troops to meet their annual qualification requirements for the full range of weapons they would use. Analysis would include all practicable uses and the impacts and mitigation needed.

Alternative 1 increases use of unmanned aerial systems, and new weapons systems. Enhancements to the range would include a multi-purpose machine gun range, digital multi-purpose training range, convoy live-fire range, demolition training range, Joint-Use Range Building, and a drop zone. The designed layout keeps disturbance directed toward the pre-existing target range.

**Q:** What types of metals or hazardous material are left after detonation?

**A:** The detonation process destroys most of it. Residue is primarily C-4, but all elements have to be analyzed, and what degree of risk.

Alternative 2 expands on Alternative 1 by increasing the frequency of training events, and adding some range enhancements, including a second convoy live-fire range, four mortar pads, and a helicopter landing zone. There are no requirements for construction or new roads. Identified issues include protecting natural resources, species of concern, cultural resources, fire management and range sustainability, aircraft overflights and weapon noise. The site contains one of the largest undisturbed areas of remaining shrub-steppe habitat. Consultation with ODFW is ongoing. Cultural resource actions include consultation with four Native American tribes, and inventory of buildings/structures. There are listed sites of the Oregon Trail, and a contractor is doing the full assessment of cultural resources. Fire management strategies are included in the plan. There are existing water contamination issues in the lower Umatilla, but no point-source has been identified at the training site. Small arms target areas may not collect every bullet fragment, but all shell casings are collected. The Range Sustainability Environmental Program Assessment will be a supporting document of the EIS.

Access to the site is limited because there is the potential for unexploded ordnance on the site. There are very limited records of what live charges were used before the Navy took over the site in 1958. Public safety is a priority. They will conduct a study of how noise affects humans and wildlife in the area. Project timeline for this process intends for a ROD in 2013. Many public comments were received during the scoping period, which included two open houses (one in Boardman, one in Hermiston).

This will end up being a giant document, because so many items must be analyzed. Transparency and good policy requires disclosure, so that all stakeholders are aware of the impact of current use and any proposed change. Project website: [www.NWSTFBoardmanEIS.com](http://www.NWSTFBoardmanEIS.com) There are other planning activities (energy, weeds, etc) that are occurring on the same property, so they all must be coordinated. Emphasis is on avoiding disturbance to the south end as much as possible.

**Comment:** If this analyzes current uses, the Research Natural Area is a current use, and it doesn't show up in the current presentation. It must be included in the final document, to show accurate valid uses.

**Q:** If this plan is adopted, will the Oregon National Guard need other space?

**A:** No, this should be sufficient to meet their expected needs.

**Q:** Are there perennial streams or surface water on the range?

**A:** No, except for scant pooling after heavy rain.

### **Baker Resource Management Plan – Alison Kuehl**

The scoping process included nine community meetings, and coordination with Tribes and regulatory agencies. Key issues identified included landscape health/land use, renewable energy development, transportation and access, and livestock grazing. All the action alternatives include provision for benefit to local, regional and national economies through activities including renewable energy development, while adhering to laws/policies and focuses on ecosystem health and meeting rangeland health standards. Alternative 1 is the preferred, but alternatives were modified based on input through the scoping process. The RAC will be kept apprised of the status of the plan process.

### **John Day RMP Status Update – Debbie Henderson-Norton**

Planning progress is on hold until further guidance is received. There will be a 30-day protest period once the Final EIS is printed, and the Prineville District hopes to issue the ROD this fall.

### **Blue Mountain Forest Plan Alternatives – Kevin Martin**

The Forest began their official NEPA Action in March 2010. The current slate of alternatives was completed in February 2011. Issues revolve around access, ecological resiliency, economic and social well-being, grazing, old forest, and considerations for wilderness preservation. Travel management planning is a separate planning process. This is an expansive land base with several types of land category, traditional uses, and resource values. Alternative 'C' has much more potential wilderness proposed; providing more connectivity for wildlife. It maintains old forest areas undisturbed and emphasizes natural processes. Alternative 'D' provides for more motorized use, timber/range lands, and allows limited motorized use in most areas. It maximizes the goods & services provided from the Federal lands. Alternatives 'E' & 'F' blend many elements of the other plans. There are more back-country uses on some parts and more emphasis on preservation of other areas. The timeline is targeted to an October release of the draft, so the RAC will get an opportunity to look at the draft before publication. It is likely that there will be an extended comment period before compiling the FEIS. There has been a lot of interest from the public and they want to be involved in the plan process.

**Q:** Are the wildlife corridors focused on the bighorn sheep?

**A:** Not entirely.

**Public Comment Period:** No public visitors in attendance.

### **Discussion of Naval Weapons Training Facility plan:**

There are no lands in the project area that are under management of the Forests or the BLM. The B2H proposed route may come close, and that could be useful information to the RAC if they make a recommendation on the B2H transmission lines. The plant community there contains very rare global species. The bird and wildlife populations rely on that vegetation. The fire regimen and the periods of

disturbance would have a large impact on species. It would be good to know if the mitigation plans would involve agency-managed lands. A determining factor about whether this becomes an agenda item would be if it would benefit the DFO to have the RAC explore this topic. This is an issue that the RAC members should probably monitor but at this point there is no concrete action that is required. The RAC and some members are on the mailing list for the project.

**BLM's Vegetation EIS:** Meagan Conry

AECComm is the contractor who is doing the analysis for the District level EAs, and they will all tier from the national and statewide EISs. Treating weeds is the focused priority. The herbicides would be one avenue of a fully-integrated vegetation management process. Essential consultation is ongoing with the NMFS and USFWS. Consultation will likely be zoned: East-side and West-side. The agency is now preparing for scoping by tailoring Purpose & Need and key stakeholders that would be included. The BLM hopes to implement the decision with the field season of 2012.

On a national basis, risk assessments are being done on three new herbicides, review of two of the approved ones, and developing a web-based interactive tool for field units.

**Q:** How close is the agency to getting this done?

**A:** We're at the beginning stages right now; getting the infrastructure in place to be able to move out with a tangible product to look at. Each District is on their own track of organizing their effort.

**Q:** Does the EA include specifications for application methods?

**A:** There will be guidance on how application is done for each specific district, but should allow for the most flexibility for site-by-site utilization. The agency is striving to make the most effective use of this management tool.

**Q:** Is this the last stepdown, or will there have to be EAs for specific projects?

**A:** This is the level that should be sufficient. Following the guidelines of regulatory agencies and the guidance for each product, further analysis should not be required. Monitoring will be part of the consultation and ongoing implementation of this project.

**Q:** What does "site-specific" mean in this context?

**A:** The stepdown analysis level is the entire district, and what those effects might be. If there are some locations that will require specialized treatment or have special invasives that might require a more precise prescription, or a very specific need for the steps after treatment, those would fall into the category of additional analysis.

**Q:** Who is responsible for taking the next steps after a weed treatment is completed?

**A:** The weed specialist at the District would be focused on the site reaching desired condition, so DMs have oversight on this.

**COMMENT:** The weeds subgroup may want to review the letter sent by the RAC on the National and Statewide EISs, and resend an updated version if there were specific modifications that the RAC would want to encourage.

### **Brainstorming Potential Topics for Joint RAC Meeting**

- Energy
- Sage Grouse Plan
- Travel Management
- Malheur Management Plan
- Weeds
- Fuels Treatment
- Recreation RAC

### **Manager's Updates**

**Vale District, Don Gonzalez:** Changes since November – Baker RMP update already given. The operating plan for Mormon Basin went through without any appeals. Scoping report on Boardman to Hemingway is due to go to the printer.

**Monica Schwalbach, Wallowa-Whitman NF:** She introduced herself – is the new Forest Supervisor. The Forest Travel Management Plan should be done by the end of this summer. Some consultation with regulatory agencies and tribes is still in the process. The Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Cove II proposes to continue efforts from 2005; using more effective strategies. With vegetation at Snow Mountain, the Forest is proposing several treatment methods to reduce fuel loads over a five-year period. The air tanker base at LaGrande has been closed for the summer for runway and apron repair. The forest is looking for an adequate temporary facility for the air tankers while this project is completed.

**Darren Lemon, Malheur NF:** The access & travel management DEIS will be out at the end of June, with a closing date at end of July. The only limitation is on cross-country travel, so they hope it won't be terribly contentious. The Forest is working on a draft Biological Opinion for some enjoined allotments in the Blue Mountains area. Right now they are rebuilding the Prairie City Ranger Station, so everyone is working out of the Supervisor's Office in John Day.

**Q:** Have heard that there is one allotment that has exceeded allowable use before the turnout date. Is that true?

**A:** Not aware of that. The Murderer's Creek allotment is the likely place.

**Kevin Martin, Umatilla NF:** The new office will open in just over a year. Proposals for lease options included one in the Coyote Business Park near the Wild Horse Resort. The Confederated Tribes will be the landlord. The office will have easy access right off I-84, just five miles east of Pendleton. Meacham Creek Restoration project has begun, covering both Forest and Tribal lands, returning a stream to its former course and restoring stream function that had been disturbed by the railroad right-of-way. "Greenfire," the Aldo Leopold documentary, has debuted and the Forest will be showing it locally.

The North End Allotment team is preparing the Final EIS so the Forest hopes to release the Record of Decision this fiscal year. Wildcat II vegetation & fuels treatment project EA is ready to implement after Judge Brown's ruling, expected in June. Cobbler II EIS draft was also appealed, so the Forest is working on the related issues; the hope to reissue a Supplemental EIS in the fall or early winter. Fuels treatment @ Tollgate will go with ARRA funding. Potamus Fuels Reduction near Pendleton Lake is also on the lineup. A Record of Decision for Invasive Species was issued last year and the Forest was upheld on the single appeal that was filed.

There will be two youth training camps this year; one at end of June for Tri-City School District girls only, the second one in October for the Morrow County fire & fuels camp for high school seniors only. July 16, the Forest intends to hold a stakeholders' field trip to look at vegetation management treatment sites and landscape analysis. The RAC is invited to join that visit if the plan comes together.

**Debbie Henderson-Norton, Prineville District:** No known change on the Cascade Crossing project. There is interest in wind energy and geothermal possibilities, but those projects may not fall within the RAC boundary. North Pole Ridge MET towers were recently approved. Wilderness issues will be looked at on the RAC field visit tomorrow. The boater permit system has been implemented, and no appeals were received. March 1 was the first permit window, and the second release was May 1. Permits went quickly at both opportunities. The system worked very well to keep the process honest and fair. The launch permit limits may balance the use throughout the week instead of having the river slammed each weekend. The effort for outreach included all past permit recipients.

### **Round Robin:**

**Pat Dunham:** Honored to get reappointed. He's a river steward for the John Day River, and will tackle both assignments.

**Tim Unterwegner:** There was a coordinated resource plan (CRMP) for the Phillip W. Snyder Wildlife Area. He recently heard that the Forest Service & BLM do not want to continue with the CRMP of the wildlife area. ODFW got the grazing permit, but formed a grazing association so that there would be an allowable permittee. In the last few months, the permit was issued to two individuals, so it leaves management of the wildlife area without coordinated management. Users wanted an area closure for public entry to the area, but that was not issued by the BLM. Would like to see more coordination. Steve Allen is the point of contact.

**COMMENT:** NEPA compliance and consultations are the driving issue for the Federal agencies.

**Patricia Gainsforth:** Biggest issue is that the Resource Conservation Councils segment of the NRCS were left unfunded nationwide in the 2011 budget agreement. It is a program that pays for itself many times over, so will be a big loss.

**Terry Drever-Gee:** Good news is that Don has gained favor with the Eastern Oregon Mining Association (EOMA) with his due diligence. They would like to see a roundtable with all Federal managers. Some operating plans have been pending for 12 years, and EOMA would like to see everyone operate within the law.

**Berta Youtie:** Native plant organization has expanded from the Deschutes basin into the John Day basin, adding many new partners. First meeting of the John Day partners will be held next week. She's working on a new contract to develop a sagebrush matrix for evaluating sites for sage grouse restoration and test that matrix. The coal-fired plant at Boardman has planted a noxious weed that normally grows in warmer climates to use as a biomass fuel. Oregon Department of Agriculture does not think it will spread in this cooler climate, but it has never been here before, so there is no data. Plant is known as arundo.

**Dave Riley:** No visible recognition of the RAC's letter on the wild horse & burro program. Lack of feedback does not indicate that the RAC's input is valued. He would like a clearer understanding of the grazing matrix being considered for the John Day basin. The legislation that delisted the wolf in three states was the latest of many attempts by Congress to override the Endangered Species Act, but none of them have been successful.

**Mike Hayward:** Has developed a greater understanding of what the Feds are dealing with in housing unwanted animals. Wallowa County just had to take custody of a herd in the area, costing a sizeable sum. Wolf management responsibility reverts to states on May 5, so that will affect ODFW. The local mill has re-started on a smaller scale, and Malheur Lumber has some hopeful initiatives going too. Baker County is looking into pellet mills and there is great interest in these avenues to serve the need for jobs and alternative energy sources. Schools, hospitals and other infrastructure sites are looking at potential biomass use. There are some challenges with transporting juniper, but people are exploring the possibilities.

**Adriane Borgias:** Returned from India last month. Grateful for the abundance found in this country. The people in India are much more mindful of their impact on the environment, but population that big, the environment cannot heal itself. It is extremely valuable to have input from citizens in groups like the RACs. Appreciate being here so much.

**Art Waugh:** There is movement on energy for tribal lands on the westside, with some tribes trying to make their lands more accessible. Managers are giving some consideration to efforts to eliminate some of the barred owls. They are classed as raptors, though, so have some legal protection. The Heppner area is planning to replace culverts and make areas more fish-friendly, with a few miles of roads closed. Off road enthusiasts are hoping to get some Class II areas as part of this effort.

#### **Closeout:**

Next Meeting September 8-9, 2011 in Baker City.

November meeting will be onsite: November 28 for travel and new member orientation, November 29 for business meeting. One desired agenda item is discussing more efficient ways of transmitting power/energy efficiency to minimize the impact on and disturbance of public lands.

Adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

\*\*\*ACTION: Kevin Martin will bring a copy of the movie "Greenfire" to the next meeting.

\*\*\*ACTION: Alison Kuehl will send CD of the Blue Mountain Plan material to the subgroup members, (Adriane Borgias, Art Waugh, Berta Youtie, Patricia Gainsforth, Pat Dunham, Bill Lang, Terry Drever-Gee, Dan Forsea, and Aaron Killgore) for their review.

\*\*\*ACTION: Baker Subgroup will send comments to Adriane by June 30 so a draft letter can be prepared for the September meeting.

\*\*\*ACTION: Pam Robbins will send updated roster to all members that reflects subgroup and new member information.

\*\*\*ACTION: Kevin Martin will send a corrected version of the maps to any RAC member who requests one.

\*\*\*ACTION: Kevin Martin will get a copy or link to the plan for subgroup members as soon as it has cleared RO & WO review. Full RAC should review it to inform discussion at the next meeting. It will make it easier to get a basic sense of where a consensus recommendation could be developed.

\*\*\*ACTION: Berta Youtie/Pam Robbins will submit the Veg EIS letter previously sent to the BLM with a preface that explains that the comments were submitted on the Statewide EIS. "These comments were previously submitted by the JDS..."

\*\*\*ACTION: Mark Wilkening will send the RAC members a briefing paper on the Recreation RAC situation.

\*\*\*ACTION: Managers will share the RAC's concern with the State Office DSD for Resources that conservation and consolidation is not being adequately addressed in the evaluation of proposed energy transmission proposals, and energy efficiency efforts in general. There is currently no incentive to limit the impact on public lands and resources. (Energy Collaborative).

\*\*\*ACTION ITEM: Don Gonzalez will verify where the WHB letter was directed, and if a response was ever sent.

\*\*\*ACTION: Prineville District will send out a CD of the John Day Basin FEIS when it is available.

\*\*\*ACTION: Monte Kuk will address the grazing matrix on the field trip.

\*\*\*ACTION: Debbie will work with John Guebels, Chip Faver, Steve Allen, {\*\*} on the Murderer's Creek conservation area.

  
Berta Youtie, RAC Chair 7/26/11

  
Debbie Henderson-Norton, RAC DFO