Final Notes
John Day Snake
Resource Advisory Council
February 7, 2006
Pendleton, OR-Oxford Suites

Meeting Coordinator/Recorder: Virginia Gibbons
Facilitator: Dale Johnson

Meeting Called to Order-John Tanaka, Chairman

Introductions/New Members -Dave Moryc, Robert Parker new members

RAC Members present: John Tanaka-Chair, David Riley, Dan Forsea, Michael Hayward, Art Waugh, Bill Lang, Bob Parker, David Moryc, Shirley Muse, Phil Shephard, Terry Drever-Gee.

RAC Federal Officials present: Barron Bail-Prineville DM, Dave Henderson-Vale DM, Kurt Wiedenmann (for Steve Ellis)

Visitors: Joani Bosworth (Umatilla NF-Public Affairs), Spencer Hovecamp (NOAA-Pendleton office).

Presentors: Brent Ralston and Tina Welch (John Day RMP); Mitch Bulthuis (Blue Mtn Forests Noxious Weed EIS); Dan Ermovick (Blue Mtn Forests-OHV Strategy), Blue Mtn Forests Revision-Dave Schmitt.

RAC members not present: Adriane Borgias, Frank Bird, Berta Youtie

Federal officials not present or represented: Jeff Walter-Ochoco NF; Kevin Martin-Umatilla NF; Roger Williams-Malheur NF.

****Attendance meets the requirement of a quorum***

Introduction of new facilitator

Travel voucher procedures
Mail vouchers to:
Amy Bannon
3050 NE 3rd St
Prineville, OR 97754

Questions about vouchers? Please contact Amy at 541-416-6787

September & November Meeting notes approval
Sept notes approval
Motion: Dave Riley

Second Motion: Michael Hayward
All in favor, none opposed, motion passed.

Nov notes approval
FERC relicensing-last page change "not" to "now", spelling change on Dan Forse
Motion to approve: David Riley
Second motion: Michael Hayward
All in favor, none opposed, motion passed.

Rac Membership Renewal

- Some terms are coming to end/heads up-process for applying soon
- Timber is vacant spot (Tribe can represent one of the interests-does not have to be the tribal seat, per se)

Each seat requires 2 applicants-RAC members please help network these positions in order to meet that requirement

Letter from BLM State Director Elaine Marquis-Bronq

- Southeast Oregon and John Day Snake RACs to remain separate
- Request from Elaine to members: Work on consensus recommendations between BLM/FS-OHV, sage grouse, planning & monitoring. Work with SEOR RAC on any sage grouse recommendations.

FERC Re-licensing-Hells Canyon

- Draft terms & conditions issued through Department of Interior (end of January) included FWS, BLM, FS and BOR.
- Under Energy Policy Act, new process in place (congressional action). Anyone may challenge the mandatory terms & conditions on basis of facts used in justifying term & conditions. Manifests in a hearing that can be cross-examined by company, non-governmental organization or tribal attorneys. This is different than recent re-licensing, as in Pelton Round Butte. Hells Canyon is the first relicensing project under new process
- In past, FERC was the entity that had the opportunity to question the re-licensing process
- Due to the process change, terms & conditions created are well focused; 19 mandatory terms & conditions and at least as many recommendations
- Terms & conditions primarily in recreation & cultural resources (aquatic conditions & terrestrial on the recommendation side)
- Several tribes disagree with FS, BLM, USFWS regarding requirement that money be spent money on recreation; tribes position is the money should be directed towards aquatics & restoration purposes.
- Used FWS 10J authority (higher standard than what can be used for recommendation, below what we can use for terms)
- All parties have a month to file complaints; due the end of February
- Hearings in June; judge's decision in July
- Parties can come in at end of process with alternatives-FERC will take cheaper alt if it still meets the intent of the mitigation package
- Re-licensing package is $240 million

Q. Is the FERC required to implement the decision that the judge issues?
A. There are 2 steps; we'll need to look into that further during the process. Will keep the RAC posted on developments.

<u>Vegetation Treatment EIS-Draft & Finalize RAC Response Letter</u>

Feedback on reviewing the draft:

- Difficult to review huge, complex document in time to comment
- Requested several hard copies of document but never received; difficult to wade through CDs/ PDF files; could not locate information needed-search mechanism using key words is an important feature to build into CDs for planning-more user-friendly for public comment.
- 3 public meetings in Boise, Portland and Salt Lake. Could not attend or ask questions of people who wrote document.
- County weed managers haven't reviewed document; 1/4 of State is managed by BLM-these are far-reaching proposals for weed treatments, Rx.
- In general, treatments are supported-ie thinning; however, word was out the document was contracted. Writer/editors chose not to put in justification about treating thousands of acres with herbicide; feel this oversight puts BLM in a vulnerable position when it decision is challenged
- FS document on Weeds EIS more concise/easier to understand
- Not much emphasis in BLM document that clearly articulates weed prevention-FS EIS did a much better job of addressing; will ultimately be much more cost effective to do preventative treatments.
- A lot of risk analysis to get herbicides approved; process was identified, which was good.
- Documents speak to several herbicides to be used for veg treatments to help trees grow; ie-spray shrubs to keep them from out competing trees: Big red flag/risky proposal. Certain herbicides are effective; however BLM will get hit by groups critical of herbicide use. Document needs extra attention to herbicide applications and a step down EIS/EA process for local conditions/applications, ie working with USFWS and specific impacts on species identified.
- A great deal of Rx is proposed to be completed in sage-steppe habitats; some of these habitats are very vulnerable to annual bromes.
- Regarding aquatic species-Wondering about effects on salmon/other listed species: another potential red flag. Document often refers to other documents -difficult if you don't have the reference. A few places have links to other documents (helpful).

Suggested change to response letter:

- Identify how projects are stepped down from the programmatic document and how folks can be involved in the risk analysis process in local applications.
- Subgroup assigned to draft new language over lunch (Phil, Terry, Shirley, John)
- Approve changes this afternoon

Approve Final VEG EIS RAC Response letter
Motion to Approve: David Riley
Second motion: Michael Hayward
All in favor, none opposed, motion passed.
Letter to be forwarded electronically to Elaine via Barron; John sign hard copy and mail to Prineville BLM for RAC files.

Blue Mtn Forests Noxious Weed EIS/ Mitch Bulthuis, Range Staff on Wallowa-Whitman NF
Handout provided

Regional Invasive Plants EIS:
Signed in 2005; programmatic document; 20 forests update site specific weed mgmt program

What the R6 EIS will provide:
Replace the 1988 Record of Decision and Mediated Agreement; new prevention, treatment and restoration standards; greater range of allowable treatment tools

-Blue Mountain mapping weeds and identifying priority weeds for 3 forests
-Working with counties to identify priority weed list
-Identifying special management areas
-Identifying high spread potential
-Riparian
-TES Plant
-2006 Schedule

Currently working with weed boards for treatment strategies
April 15-Proposed action/scoping
Aug 15-Alternatives developed
Sept 2007-Sign and implement decision

Q. What role do you envision for this group within the 2006 schedule?
A. Mainly informational; have been working closely with counties.

Q. What type of documents will you be creating?
A. An EIS with ROD….

Q. You've talked about treatments; what about prevention?
A. Prevention will be included, ie working on weed seed-free hay, all contracts will require treatments.

Q. Are you working with NRCS and the irrigation districts? They have aggressive weed programs..

A. Some forests are a little further ahead than others; the Umatilla has been working with some of their cooperators. Wallowa Whitman chooses to use weed boards to coordinate those activities.

Q. Are all branches of FS be involved in this and how?
A. Yes, we have our lab in LaGrande and they are looking at weed mgmt as well. We will involve them; to what extent, we are not sure.

Suggestions/Comments from RAC:

- During scoping phase, consider sending letter to NRCS.
- Would like to see JDS RAC more involved in this process/provide comments
- Anxious to see site specific applications tiering off the FS programmatic EIS.

Action items:

- Steve Ellis and other Forest Sup's – Help define role of RAC for this process
- Potential agenda item for May meeting

Bluet Mtn Forests OHV Strategy/ Dan Ermovick

- Chief of FS identified four threats to general forest mgmt (land fragmentation, unmanaged recreation, unhealthy forests & fuels, invasive species).
- OHV big component of unmanaged recreation
- Nov 2005, a final travel mgmt rule was published. This will revise several regulations for motor vehicle use (does not include snowmobiles, watercraft or mt bikes).
- Rule to provide: better rec opps, protection of environment, ample high quality access, address social issues
- Open areas, lack of closure orders has led to uses not compatible with social values
- Coordinate with counties, state & tribal govts for identification process, environmnetal analysis process

Final Product:

- Each forest have travel mgmt map
- Seasons of use designation
- Roads & trails designated; much cross country use eliminated

Guidebook/protocol

- Kevin Martin-Umatilla NF Supervisor helped develop; available on FS Washington Office website
- Inventory & Design Guide-lots of input from East & West forests; wide spectrum; many OHV users unorganized (growing rec area); inventories can range from complete inventories to focusing on areas of high suitability.
- Conduct EA and final Administrative Action/motorized vehicle use

Q. How does this effort tie to forest plan?
A. Blue Mtn Forests somewhat unique-our current Blue Mtn Forest Revision planning effort is complimentary to efforts with OHV strategy. Each forest is to have site-specific map to be updated

periodically. Wallowa Whitman needs to meet 4-year time frame to determine areas of suitability;

getting GIS layers up to date for 2007; 2008 will be alternative development; 2009 identify other NEPA requirements and produce motorized vehicle map.

Comment from Art: There are some concerns with inventory process. Our problem is getting our groups to work with forest/districts to identify what is used and wanted. The State ATV committee has been spending some $'s on the West side; they are moving away from that in order to put money towards the design of roads and trails. Working toward where we combine all uses for trails.

Suggestion from Dan to Art: If OHV recreationists utilize specific areas where there are existing trail systems, focus the feedback to the forests in those areas.

Q. I recreate with a group called all terrain people. We drive out to woods, park and then look for birds. Are we dispersing weeds this way? It seems that birdwatchers are going out cross-country in woods, not on trails. Should this be given greater emphasis? Should we include these groups in providing information?
A. Risk seems low

<u>Blue Mtn Forest Plan Revision Update-Dave Schmitt</u>

- Dave passed around Blue Mtn Forest Revision Plan pins to thank members for participation and comments.
- Forest Supervisors recently adopted the "Inventory for Areas with Wilderness Potential" Map, will be included as an appendix in the inventory that the RAC commented on. Will present the map to the public in May (Terry currently has copy).
- Next step is evaluation for each wilderness and ask how it should be managed (ask for public comments beginning of May).
- Inventory of eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers; present to Forest Sup's on Feb 22nd; will also be reviewed
- Finalization of veg data-have spent a year to have it current across the 3 forests. Will use it for modeling and as a basis for decisions, impacts
- Finalize designated areas-botanical, wilderness, wild & scenic rivers. Also includes geologic areas, special areas-within next couple months.
- Riparian & aquatic data-pulling it together
- Focal species list-indicators for mgmt impacts-out for review on website
- Revise the vision (RAC reviewed & commented). Comments from RAC echoed by others. Trying to address comments within suitability framework. Vision comments will help to determine strategies, objectives, suitability and design criteria.
- Rec residence and minerals-stays mostly the same from old plan.
- Timber, grazing, OHV are the significant issues. Proposed maps to be shared with co-conveners on Thursday. Waiting for Dan's work on what is suitable for OHV use; incorporate into planning effort.

- Identify fish distribution

Upcoming Events:

- April meeting to key contacts before taking to public: Inventory of Areas for Wilderness Potential, Wild & Scenic Rivers, Grazing & Timber suitability.
- May public meetings/open house format
- June-September-talk about design strategies, timber suitability, grazing suitability in smaller groups.

Q. Are you going to be looking at energy, ie wind generation?
A. That needs additional work; more than we are prepared to do. We'll have maps of potential areas for geothermal.

Suggestion: When you get into minerals, contact….
A. Greg ? has been coordinating that outreach effort.

Q. How can we provide you the best input for your process?
A. Help design the strategy/resolution for a particular issue, ie the Inventory for Areas with Wilderness Potential. Particularly for the June-September time frame.

Q. What did the team think about the field trips? Did you think they were productive?
A. It was a different clinentele and there were different discussions. The John Day field trip was more collaborative among attendess. Folks seemed to realize complications better when looking at things on-site; they could see the entire picture of what's happening on the ground.

Wilderness Inventory/comments received

- If there is a large fire, do we want to do something about it?
- Do we have enough money to treat warm/dry and cool/moist areas-veg type
- Limited motorized activity-ie helicopter logging vs mechanized
- Once we identify inventoried roadless, we cannot build roads
- Most of what you have asked has been addressed; We are generating fire class/condition map

Action Items/future meeting agenda topics:
May meeting: Dave bring Inventory Wilderness Map; talk about subgroups' role in Rac Co-conveners meeting in February and April-identify additional assistance to be provided by RAC (Terry).
September meeting: RAC develop strategy/resolution for particular issues-ie Wilderness potential mapping.

Subgroup Updates
Planning –Terry- Dave Schmitt covered it
Noxious weeds-Veg EIS comment letter finalization
Sage Grouse-(Dave/Barron)

- Update from Christian Hagen (ODFW in Bend) on local working groups. The group in Baker County is set up. Team is comprised of Rex Nelson and Wonnie MacKenzie, as well

as biologists and advisors from USFWS. First couple of meetings have addressed sage grouse populations in Baker and Union County; identified increasing, decreasing and constant populations. Focus on the decreasing populations & number of project potentials-assessing for feasibility. Looking at projects regardless of public or private land status. Looking to see if the JDS RAC has a role to play. Statewide sage grouse team has remained intact to glean efficiencies from separate groups.

- Another group in Central Oregon is trying to pull some data together. Some frustration over discussing vs getting to project work. NRCS is joining the Central Oregon group. Some grant funding is available for projects. We need to know better what we want to accomplish before looking for funding sources.

OHV-Art

- In response to Elaine's letter about not combining the RACs, she asked for coordinated responses. If you have any thoughts/comments on OHV strategy, let Art know. Plan to start talking with the other RAC OHV reps to coordinate a response.

Plaque Presentation to Jeff Blackwood

To the retired Umatilla NF Supervisor, in special thanks for all the years of dedication and active participation in the John Day Snake Rac-presented by Dave Henderson.

Public Comment Period-No public present or comments presented

Salmon Recovery Planning Effort Update-Jeff Blackwood

- NOAA fisheries trying to develop plans within next year
- Recoveries for Mid-Columbia Steelhead and the Oregon part of the Snake
- Paula Burgess has asked Jeff to facilitate public involvement in the Imnaha, etc
- 3 primary policy issues:
- State of Oregon taking the lead for Mid-Columbia and some extent, the Grande Ronde. Would like to take it a step above de-listing based on cultural, harvest and tribal interests.
- Technical recovery team is trying to define point where species can be de-listed.
- Different populations have different recovery scenarios: which combinations do we need to get to delisting-there are choices
- Based on limiting factors and other things that define viable populations, what mgmt actions are required.

Action Item-Jeff provide update at September meeting.

John Day Basin RMP Project Initiation-Brent Ralston, Project Coordinator

- Provided map handout that defines the area covered by the plan
- Thanks to Terry who attended Planning Nuts and Bolts Training

- Background/process/RAC role
- Plan includes portions of Grant, Wheeler, Wasco, Grant, Jefferson, Morrow, Gilliam and Sherman Counties.

- Prineville BLM has been working hard since ’95 to consolidate scattered holdings

Current mgmt:

- 3 existing land use plans: John Day Mgmt Plan (1985), the Two Rivers RMP (lower part of John Day River and the Deschutes river portion; and the Baker RMP). All of these plans were amended by the John Day River Wild and Scenic River Plan.
- Newly acquired 44,000 acres of land in the North Fork area-does not currently have any existing mgmt guidelines-need for a land use mgmt plan
- A new land use plan allows us to look at existing guidance that currently does not meet our needs; and provides opportunity to amend existing plans

Planning constraints
Ecological Impacts
Economic Impacts
Social Impacts

Project Timeline

- Started collecting data in 2004
- Secured budget in 2005 for 3 years
- 2005-2006-collecting data-Wild & Scenic River suitability study, veg data on landscape scale
- Winter 2006-Notice of Intent out within the next several weeks
- Fall 2006-Analysis of Management Situation to be published and reviewed-looks at existing land use guidance.
- Fall 2007-Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- Summer 2008-Final EIS
- Fall 2008-Record of Decision

Key Topics in RMP

- Public Land Access and Travel Mgmt
- OHV use
- Special Mgmt Areas
- Visual Resource Mgmt (scenic)
- Land Tenure Status (sale, acquisition, disposal)
- Mgmt of new acquired lands

Products

- Public outreach strategy/action plan for scoping
- AMS
- Final EIS
- Context of Effects (Broad Scale)

- Record of Decision RMP
- Implementation Plan
- Project Mgmt Schedule

We are attempting to create a user-friendly document that is readable and engaging.

Immediate Efforts

- Public scoping-within next month through March
- Preparing AMS through early June
- Initiating external coordination
- Finalize AMS end of summer
- Public comment in fall

Public Scoping

- James Kent Associates contract
- BLM national contract with Sonoran Institute-Economic Profile System. Two workshops in John Day and Fossil Jan 25 & 26.
- Public meetings/open houses-generate input to update current maps (Redmond, John Day, Fossil, Pendleton, Forest Grove)

James Kent data

- Have decentralized meetings & get togethers
- Need accurate maps
- Want access to public lands

Sonoran Workshops

- Aimed at understanding local economy
- Opens dialogue for other ideas/broader issues for communities
- Well attended & received in both Fossil (more focused on future) & John Day (more focus on trees, traditional extractive uses)

Prepare AMS

- Current, historic & desired conditions
- Ask question "Is current mgmt working?"

Other opportunities

- 5 year pilot project with Sonoran Institute (John Day)
- Aimed at understanding the collaboration process and funding to complete projects
- University of Colorado students develop transportation plans with real-time user interface for decision making. Develop a preliminary plan for travel & access this summer (web-based GIS tool)

External Coordination

- Cooperating agency groups-county, state and federal-NOAA, NPS, etc
- Tribal entities-Umatilla, Warm Springs, Yakama and Burns-Paiute

- Resource Advisory Council

Cooperator Participation
- Provide data and information
- Develop, refine and focus issues
- Develop and refine alt's
- Specifically focus on Public Access & Travel Mgmt Plan

Proposed RAC Involvement
- Review Products Developed in the Planning Process-AMS, Issues, Alternatives Proposed
- Specifically focus on Off-Highway Vehicle Use
- Help develop alternatives

RAC Involvement-How to accomplish
-Formal ways to engage through subcommittees
-Informal subgroup to provide feedback of RAC members (preferred method)

John Day RMP-Tina Welch, Central Oregon Resource Area Manager
- Focusing on Issues that Need to Be Re-examined
- OHV piece is going to be controversial and we need your input

Q. How will you look at energy and minerals?
A. We have mapping done on that…wind energy is an emerging opportunity that will be covered under the plan.

Q. What about development of cel towers?
A. Counties/communities have been asking this question too, and we will be looking at this closely.

Question from Tina: Is the RAC willing to work with us as collaborators on a particular issue? We suggest that OHV may be the important controversial issue…

Potential Role for RAC
Summary of AMS in early May-group look at draft document before going out to public
When we start looking at drafting the EIS we may look at more intensive involvement from the group. Subgroup may need to meet a couple of times in the summer. Once the AMS is done, grab onto the OHV piece, where the subgroup will help develop alt's.

Suggestion to RAC from member: We seem to function better when we have something to bite into. This is similar to ICBEMP and some of the more productive things we've worked on. I think we should support the planning effort.

Note: If we form a subgroup, it needs to be balanced among the different RAC interest groups.

Art-I am not familiar with historic & current use of OHV use in the John Day RMP area.

Q. Can this project be used as a template for most of the current planning efforts?
A. It is possibly something we could use to facilitate and coordinate between the RACS on the east side.

We hear the RAC wants involvement in the planning process and the OHV piece.

Action Item: Next meetings, we can provide info on the AMS and OHV use and perhaps we can finalize the subgroup at the next meeting. September meeting will focus on the John Day RMP.

<u>Finalize 2006 Annual Work Plan</u>

Key Issues

- We've addressed most of the issues through plan revisions or existing subgroups
- Not sure whether there's anything going on with Hells Canyon, sage grouse/salmon issues and our level of involvement.
- Hells Canyon CMP group is forming that is focused on implementation-includes District Ranger, various groups and counties. In talking with Steve Ellis, there are18 people involved in the group. He may want to bring a specific issue to this group. We are currently in the implementation phase.
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Action Item: Kurt Wiedenmann to monitor Hells Canyon group as potential agenda topic for next mtg.

<u>Subgroup recommendations</u>
Noxious weeds-Chair: Berta Youtie; Members: Terry Drever-Gee, Shirley Muse, Phil Shephard, Adraine Borgias, Dan Forsea
Monitor sage grouse (Berta)
Blue Mtn Forest Plan-Chair: Terry Drever-Gee; Members: Mike Hayward, Phil Shepherd, David Moryc, Adriane Borgias, Shirley Muse, William Lang, David Riley).
John Day Plan subgroup (emphasis on OHV, will also include energy and rec).

Action Item:**Chair and members of John Day Plan subgroup to be identified at next meeting.**

Motion to approve final '06 work plan: Terry Drever-Gee
Second the motion: Art Waugh
All in favor, none opposed, motion approved
Decision: Work Plan approved

<u>Roundtable</u>

Dave Henderson

- Update on grazing rule: still in addendum phase; being ruminated by Justice, CEQ, etc. No date yet on publication in fed register.

- Fed reg notice out on changes to NEPA/hand out news release/two categorical exclusions that could help us in permit renewal process
- Working on hiring a field mgr in Baker

David Riley

- Salmon recovery and hydropower (Would like to hear more about it-what about in the RMP?) It seems to be an issue we are not paying much attention to.

David Moryc

- Good to be part of the RAC
- Echo Dave's sentiments on keeping abreast of salmon recovery. Can we look for opportunities to support any recovery pieces within the existing planning efforts.

John Tanaka

- Became Society of Range Management President last week; national mtg next week
- Provided SRM priorities 2006-2007

Spencer Hovecamp, NOAA Fisheries, La Grande ***(request time on future agenda)***

- Eastern Oregon Branch Chief for NOAA
- Looking to hire 2 fish bio's; request RAC to help network
- Located in field office (at ranger district) in LaGrande since 2001

Barron Bail

- BLM & FS signed MOU with Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to develop a market for biomass-includes Deschutes, Ochoco, Mt Hood and Prineville BLM. Tribes working with energy companies to get purchasing contracts. Hope to accelerate forest health treatments.
- All permittees have or will receive letter from our director to adopt a horse or burro older than 10 years old in an effort to get them out of long-term care facilities.

Robert Parker

- Appreciate the opportunity to be part of the RAC, looking forward to opportunities for participation

Joani Bosworth (PAO-Umatilla NF)

- Dan Ermovich did a nice job talking about the OHV rule on the Wallow Whitman NF; the Umatilla NF is taking a different approach. The current forest plan is well aligned with the new OHV rule. Our forest has the opportunity to roll over our plan underneath the new rule vs. developing a new plan. The Umatilla does have lands in both OR & WA. Will have to include some signing on the ground and look at problem areas and issues and coordinate public involvement.
- School Fire Salvage Recovery Project-Burned 52,000 acres. We are putting together a DEIS; gone through scoping period and solicited comments. In process of completing the effects analysis; hope to have draft published in April with 45-day comment period, then start work on FEIS.

Kurt Weidenmann (Representing Steve Ellis)

- Thank you for opp's to provide updates on noxious weeds & OHV planning efforts.

- Hells Canyon Relicensing-Wallowa Whitman is focusing on range/nepa decisions and amp's.
- New District Ranger-Ken Anderson-arrival in March
- President's budget came out yesterday-Secure Rural Schools and Self-Determination Act is being extended five years. The FS is to convey or self off small, isolated parcels of land to support payments-expect considerable controversy.

Art Waugh

- Thanks to our presenters today. It looks like we finally "got some meat to put on the barbecue."
- State OHV $ is available for acquisition. Funds come from gas tax and registrations. If managers are looking to make capital improvements for designated areas, start your application process.

Virginia Gibbons

- Next JDS RAC Meeting is May 2nd & 3rd
- Warm Springs biomass field trip on Tues am and business meeting on Wednesday.