

John Day – Snake RAC Meeting Summary

Facilitator: Lisa Clark

The John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 8:09 A.M. on March 14, 2014, at the Prineville BLM District Office, Prineville, Oregon. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

Council members present: Terry Drever-Gee (Energy/Minerals); Michael Hayward (Commercial Timber); Art Waugh (Developed Recreation/OHV); Kevin Peterman (Energy/Minerals); Jim Reiss (Dispersed Recreation); Tim Unterwegner (Dispersed Recreation); Chris Perry (Elected Official); Patricia Gainsforth (Public-at-Large);. Via Conference Call Line: Adriane Borgias (Transportation/Rights-of-Way); **Absent:** Berta Youtie (Environmental Groups); Patrick Dunham (Public-at-Large, Dispersed Recreation); Lawrence Brown (State Resource Agency); Erica Maltz (Tribal Representative); 1 conservation position vacant, and one state resource agency position vacant due to resignation of Greg Cianella.

Federal Managers present: Carol Benkosky (Prineville District Manager); Don Gonzalez (Vale District Mgr.); Kate Klein (Ochoco Forest Sup); Kevin Martin (Umatilla Forest Sup); John Laurence (Wallowa-Whitman Forest Sup); NJ Erickson (Acting Malheur Forest Sup.).

For the record, it is noted that to avoid a conflict of interest, Council members absent themselves from the meeting when the Council discusses matters in which a conflict of interest may occur.

Note: RAC did not have a quorum; no decision-making occurred.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Introduction of members and federal managers present; Announcement that the 2014 call for nominations is out and due by March 27. New and reapplying members need to submit a letter of recommendation from someone who can attest to the applicant's proficiency in the area of interest (conservation, state resources, etc. Review of travel reimbursement process.

Approval of minutes: after a request for more time, they were approved in the afternoon. One change noted: include as part of Art Waugh's update that he didn't have any OHV issues pending the release of Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur Travel Management Plans.

FEDERAL OFFICIAL UPDATES

Don Gonzalez, Vale District Manager (see attached briefing): Issues presented included the Baker Field Office Final Resource Management Plan, the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission line, mining, lands and realty, range management, forestry, recreation, fisheries, and cultural.

Kevin Martin, Umatilla Forest Supervisor (see attached briefings): Topics presented included an update on the Tollgate Vegetation and Fuels Management Project, and overview of the Annual Fire and Fuels Career Camp, a review of the Veteran's Green Corps program, an update on the South George Veg and Fuels Mgmt Project and a "heads up" that



forest (speaking for Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur, Umatilla and Ochoco NFs) will face significant recreation funding challenges due to declining budgets.

RAC discussion covered looking for non-traditional sources of funding, looking for opportunities through groups like the Ford Foundation, and using volunteer resources as in-kind match for grants.

2013 Umatilla Youth and Community Engagement Review

Kevin also provided a review of the 2013 Youth and Community Engagement program at the Umatilla. This is a successful program that connects urban and rural youth with natural resources through events, activities, and service projects. The Umatilla uses partnerships to help fund and share the costs of these programs.

RAC discussion: Are girls choosing natural resource careers after these programs? Seeing some in areas of fire or law enforcement; many girls are very high achievers and have a choice of colleges and careers as they go forward. Can the Umatilla use youth to adopt spaces to reduce recreation budget impacts? Some opportunities here. Could Access and Habitat funding that already goes toward Law Enforcement be used to provide ride-alongs for youth, etc.? Can contractors be used for recreation sites? Umatilla has some contractors for campground/rec site management; however, the sites have to be productive enough to make it worth a contractors time – so dispersed, low fee or no fee areas do not attract contract resources.

John Laurence, Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor: an update of the East Face fuels project, which is a collaborative and pilot project for the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy and a joint chief's project. NRCS funding will provide 1.6 million for fuels reduction work on private lands, while the Forest Service will contribute about 1 million to the Wallowa-Whitman for surveys and treatments on forest land. State and Private forestry may also contribute for education and outreach. This is one of three projects awarded in the entire west. Imnaha Range Analysis expected to be available mid-April for public comment. Prescribed fire will begin this spring with intent of forest restoration and fuels reduction. Hells Canyon boat launch replacement is moving along (launch destroyed during flooding several years ago). Working with Oregon State Marine Board engineers to design a launch that can withstand future flooding events. W-W veteran's project will hire 3-4 for 11 months and will rotate them through different positions as learning opportunity.

Blue Mtn. Forest Plan Revision – copies are in the mail. It's 4 volumes and recommend that you review the volume with the proposed/preferred alt first to see an overview by all three forests. Then review other volumes for more details. Public meetings will start March 17 and run until April 1. These will be open house formats – FAQs and information available on websites. At this point the comment period is 90 days; however, there have been requests for extensions and this is a Regional Forester decision.

John reiterated problems with recreation budgets and added that engineering budgets are declining as well. This creates problems when restoration or road maintenance projects are on the table.



RAC discussion supported continued youth/vet discussion and programs and questioned costs of surveys. Both BLM and FS have high cost surveys when addressing projects along boundary lines or when trespass is suspected. Suggestion for students to help with surveying – yes, to a certain degree – but we have varying needs based on required standards. Students can't really help with legal standard surveying.

Kate Klein, Ochoco Forest Supervisor (see attached briefing): presented an overview of the Ochoco Summit Environmental Impact Statement that was released March 14, 2014. This EIS designates nearly 130 miles of OHV routes and responds to earlier public comment to add in class II (jeep trail) opportunities. They added some – but don't have a lot to choose from with respect to rock crawling areas. They also built in routes to vistas. The EIS addresses noise/adjacency to private land, campgrounds, etc. Additional topics included an overview of the "Wolf" vegetation management project, and the planned use of 10-15 youth crews (shared between Ochoco and Deschutes NF).

Big Summit Wild Horse Territory

Ochoco is having a rising issue here – the herd is currently estimated at two times the allowable management level (AML). Ochoco doesn't have a current management plan to have a gather or NEPA to do birth control. The forest is looking at options to use PZP, which is injected into mares, making them sterile for 1-2 years. They'd like to capture and do this on about 20 mares to slow herd growth.

RAC discussion: Can the Ochoco spay these horses? Yes, but we don't currently have the authority; this would require an Environmental Impact Statement. What is the Ochoco doing for education, because we need to address the romantic notion of these horses, when in reality they are destructive. RAC would like more information about the inventory method – are they credible? What are they based on? Ochoco NF would like RAC to work on the revision of the Wild Horse Management Plan.

NJ Erickson, Acting Malheur Forest Supervisor: Malheur has two long-standing collaboratives that are really working well and creating new conversations. They have dialogues between all sides – from Oregon Law to Oregon Wild and are making a lot of progress. Volume coming out of the forest – 2/3 is part of a 10 year stewardship contract and everyone is really using science to get to common ground. The board feet is moving from 29 million to 65 million and in January, 625 log trucks moved through John Day. These projects include biomass utilization and stream restoration. Malheur lumber is expected to add small-log processing and will increase county hiring.

RAC discussion – much of this is due to the work of Tim Lillebo (who recently passed away). Known for his work in collaboratives and ability to bring foresters and environmentalists to the table. There should be a "Tim Lillebo Collaborative" Foundation created.

Also reporting that the landownership for the headwaters of the John Day has now been blocked up – 17 sections/13,000 acres. Due to a combination of legacy of DR Johnson, congressional appropriations, donations and partners (RMEF, Grant County, etc.).



Carol Benkosky, Prineville BLM District Manager (see attached briefing): main emphasis is on completing the John Day Basin RMP. It's been on hold for so long we'll have to go back out and remind the public about it. We'll be working on a travel management and implementation plan and will need RAC support. New topics related to the new RAC boundary, which now includes the Lower Deschutes River. Is there a need for a Lower Deschutes River subgroup?

SAGE GROUSE BIOLOGY PRESENTATION

Based on a previous request for the RAC to gain a little more knowledge about sage grouse, BLM biologist, Monte Kuk, provided a species overview. General information included the bird life history, reproduction and habitat needs.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no in-person or call-in participants.

BLM RECREATION STRATEGY

Carol Benkosky provided a brief overview of the BLM's upcoming new Recreation Strategy. This new way of operating looks at the "Backyard to Backcountry" placement of BLM lands and how they fit into the economic and social values of communities. BLM also has declining recreation budgets, and this new strategy will look at how to involve the BLM as a community neighbor, and getting the community and partners involved in managing BLM recreation lands.

RAC discussion asked how the BLM would know a good vs. a not good volunteer/partnership opportunity? Response dealt with the capacity of the partner to provide what the community and BLM needed, not just what a small group wanted. As an example, the Cline Buttes area has high capacity partners – we would like to see this morph into a management collaborative that can work with less oversight, while still meeting BLM mission. How does BLM define a local community? This really morphs – it can be the city of Redmond, or it can be several communities together like those around Cline Buttes.

MINIMUM ROADS ANALYSIS

Kate Klein presented an overview of how the Forest will conduct road analyses. This is a fairly new concept, and she asked RAC opinion on how this information should be taken to the public to be best understood.

The National Forests don't have enough funding to maintain the number of roads they manage. For example, the Ochoco only maintained 7% of its roads... (132 miles out of 1560). The challenge of a road analysis is to evaluate the public's need for access with the cost of that access. The minimum or sustainable level of these roads would provide for safe and efficient travel, while identifying duplicate roads, roads not needed, etc.

This will be a multiple step process that will assess the current situation, look at benefits and risks, and describe opportunities. This is NOT a decision process, just a look at the desired future condition, and a place to start when getting public opinion. The forest will rank roads, look at options for change (e.g. decreased maintenance, closures, decommissioning,



converting to trails, etc.). With this information, future decisions can be made during planning processes. The goal will be to finish this analysis by 2015.

RAC opinion on bringing to the public:

- Let the public know that the forest would like to keep as many roads open as possible and we need their help to do it.
- Make the discussion local – relate to budgets, current maintenance, etc.
- Tell the story of the roads – what’s your “100 worst” or other stories
- Emphasize that this is an analysis NOT a decision
- Look for/talk about partners – FLAP (BLM), Forest Highway, county take-over, etc.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Mike – Pass

Tim – Would like to express thanks to Forest Service for youth hires and work with high school graduates. This really helps kids and may be the only way they can pay for school. Art – passed on information from his OHV community, including a letter describing the desire for fewer OHV restrictions, particularly in Union, Baker, Wallowa, Grant, Malheur, Harney and Umatilla counties. The access for OHVs should be considered as a critical component of land access. The letter corrected the “no OHV issue” statement made during the January meeting. The mill that closed in Cave Junction will now reopen hiring about 66 personnel; will manufacture pine windows. Reminder to send out contact lists for RAC members and federal reps.

Jim: Concur with Tim’s comment for youth. He knows how hard it is to find funding and resources to work with youth, so good job to the forests. So – is there an option to sell juniper as Christmas trees???

Terry – presented information from a member of the public over access in the South Fork Burn River area; John Laurence and Terry will follow up with the comment. Would also like to express thanks to Don Gonzalez for his presence at Eastern Oregon Mining meetings. He is making a lot of progress increasing miners’ trust in the BLM – miners are feeling heard. The draft MOU for bonding is in progress.

Patricia – suggested a name for a RAC nominee

Chris – Wheeler County has declared a drought. Some rain since, but no storage. Would like to keep the youth conversations going – and keep the opportunities coming. Many youth work on family ranches, but for others, youth corps are the only hiring option.

Kevin – have had many conversations with miners and other public land users (like Right-of-Way holders) about fees. The rules are changing and people can no longer hold on to their mining claims or ROWs. They’re throwing in the towel and the government is getting no fees instead of some fees – shooting themselves in the foot.

NEXT MEETINGS:

- **July 17-18, La Grande – will include a field trip component to look at Cohesive Wildfire Strategy**
- **November 13-14, location TBD**

Meeting Adjourned: 5:11 p.m.

