

John Day – Snake RAC Meeting Summary

Facilitator: Lisa Clark

The John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 1:06 P.M. on March 11, 2015 with a quorum, at the Oregon Department of Forestry Office, John Day, 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); Steve Lent (Archaeological and Cultural Resources), Randy Jones (State Agency Rep), Ben Gordon (Environmental Org), Erica Maltz (Tribal Rep), Greg Jackle (State Agency Rep) **Absent:** Berta Youtie (Environmental Groups); Patrick Dunham (Public-at-Large, Dispersed Recreation); Harry Dalgaard (Outdoor Recreation).

Federal Managers present: Carol Benkosky (Prineville District Manager); Don Gonzalez (Vale District Mgr.); Stacey Forson (Ochoco Forest Sup); Joani Bosworth (for Umatilla Forest Sup); Tom Montoya (Wallowa-Whitman Forest Sup); Audrey Matsumonji (for Malheur Forest Sup.), John Allen (Deschutes National 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Introduction of members and federal managers present; Announcement that the 2015 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.

Blue Mountain Plan Update

Sabrina Stadler from the Blue Mountain Plan provided an update of the process to date. They received about 1,000 comments on the draft and are working to get those analyzed. They're starting by grouping "like" comments and will work through them from there. Terry D-G made a comment that she appreciated the listening stance the forests have taken – it rebuilds the trust they didn't have from travel management. She is part of the Public Engagement Strategy Meeting and thinks this is a good approach (having a dialogue BEFORE the objection period, and bringing stakeholders to the table to see what's needed for engagement).

The main issues with the BMP → Noxious Weeds, Access, Forest Health/Old Forest/Pace and Restoration, Economy and Jobs, Wilderness, Grazing (economics and effects).

Going forward with county meetings: looking at grassroots efforts and having other organizations/groups host the public meetings (e.g. Harney County Collaborative).



Question: Can the meetings have themes? Then people know who to invite and what is expected? And the whole document is impossible to take in, so themes are needed.

Will need FACA approved groups, which allows them to represent the viewpoints and advise federal agencies to:

- Host listening sessions early summer through..?
- Solicit input from groups and have discussions
- Comment on the draft
- Identify how the public can be engaged on key issues (have conversations about select issues, even if we don't agree on end result, the range of answers is still valuable).

This RAC can be a test run for these listening sessions.

Snake River Wild and Scenic River Update

With funding down, the need for services rising, the Wallowa-Whitman is considering a fee for the Snake River. Early scoping indicates that people would consider some level of fee. (See Handout).

Timeline is expected that the fee will be posted in the Federal Register in May, along with an announcement posted along the river. The forest would hold public meetings in June, and would monitor feedback during the summer. The results would be reported during the fall RAC meeting and the forest would announce the fee decision and implementation schedule winter 2015-16.

John Day RMP

Still waiting for the final BLM Director review and approval.

John Day Permits

At the September 2014 Core Team meeting, the BLM assured the team that the John Day River Permit System would be operated with limits in 2015. However, we remain unable to return to launch limits as prescribed by the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. An on-line launch permit is still required, and fees remain in place, however there are no launch limits in 2015.

BLM is lacking a reliable way to load-test the permit system on our current server, and the agency does not have access to a cloud service, which would provide the load capacity we need. The contractor at our National Operations Center was not able to provide sufficient computer interface in time to meet our needs for 2015.

We emailed the following message to boaters: John Day River 2015 Update

- Identify how the public can be engaged on key issues (have conversations about select issues, even if we don't agree on end result, the range of answers is still valuable).
- For 2015, launch permits will again be unlimited on all river segments. This means there is no need to get a permit until close to your launch date.



- Permits are required for boating on all river segments, year-round. To get a permit go to www.blm.gov/or/permit. To check water flow forecasts, select Water Flows under Know Before You Go.
- Beginning in March, permits may be reserved for May, June and July launch dates. Permit reservations require on-line confirmation close to the launch date. Please review the confirmation instructions carefully when you make your reservation.
- Regardless of trip start date, trips that will be on the water between May 20 and July 10, between Service Creek and Tumwater Falls, have a fee of \$20 per overnight trip per group, or \$10 per one-day trip per group. The fee is non-refundable and due at the time of reservation, and is used to help keep launch areas and river campsites clean.

Lower Deschutes River (LDR) Fee Proposal

Right now the fee is \$2 per person/per day. From Memorial Day to Labor, on Fri-Sun, the fee is \$6 per person/per day.

In 2014, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs added a \$1 each fee to Harpham Flats and Sandy (put-in, take-out) sites. Almost 50% of public use goes to these sites.

The Deschutes is a Wild and Scenic River, managed by three entities – State, BLM and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. The Counties and BIA are also on the Managers Group, there is an interagency Technical Team, and the outfitters and public participate in the Working Group.

These groups were originally chartered under the Deschutes National Forest Provincial Advisory Committee but the PAC is not currently chartered. The Working Group is required to fall under the oversight of a PAC or RAC.

About 135,000 people use the LDR each year. Of the fees collected, about \$150,000 goes to Wasco County for law enforcement support, and \$150,000 goes to Oregon Parks and Recreation for their management. The BLM usually retains about \$250,000 for road maintenance, campground work, toilets, trash, boaterpass program, weeds, and all permit management, education, and other river services. The fees collected have decreased over recent years, however the base cost of services has increased.

BLM would like to restructure the fee to balance across all seasons of use. The managers group needs to decide if they approve the RAC making a recommendation.

BLM would like to request that the RAC hear this fee proposal for the LDR, and we can present the business plan in June and finalize discussion/make a recommendation at the October meeting.

RAC questions/comments:

Would you keep the season pass?

What will they get for the money?

RAC will be consistent on fees by looking at comparable services/experiences.

YES – RAC will hear LDR proposal.

Adjourn: 5:08 p.m.



**March 12, 2015 – Grant County Regional Airport, John Day
Reconvene: 8:15 a.m.**

Subcommittee check-in

Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision – subcommittee met and discussed looking at the plan and emphasizing a few areas; bring back recommendations from all alternatives. The committee could present a listening session with everyone – and will discuss the end of May via conference call. Sabrina will work with Jim Reiss to set up.

Carol Benkosky – Prineville BLM

see handout

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – 9:30

No comments

FEDERAL OFFICIAL UPDATES

Stacey Forson – Ochoco National Forest

See handout, plus:

The Ochoco is developing recreation collaboration for the Crooked River National Grassland. Recreation has increased more than 20% and the Ochoco needs help adjusting to and addressing this increased use.

Will look to bring a Wild Horse presentation to the October meeting.

Tom Montoya – Wallowa-Whitman:

- Blues Restoration – the Lower Joseph project got about 900 comments and the Wallowa expects a final decision on the project in June 2015.
- The Pilot Project for the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy would treat about 30,000 acres on the east face of Elkhorn, in conjunction with fuels treatments on about 60 private properties. NRCS is contributing about 1.4 million toward the private land treatments.
- Blue Mountain Resiliency – 4 forests (Ochoco, Malheur, Wallowa and Umatilla) are working on establishing fuel breaks in dry pine sites. Scoping for this is expected in September.
- Range Project – the final EIS for 4 grazing allotments on the Lower Imnaha is out for public comment.
- Granite Mountain Mining EIS – out for comment on 42 plans of operation. Demonstrates a big picture approach for dealing with mining.
- Burnt River – implementing the decision – combined several plans of operation and it took 12 years to get through the process. A good accomplishment.
- Working on Supplemental B while going through the Forest Plan Revision. Working on travel management project by project at this point – Sled Springs (5 year travel management decision, now through the litigation), Hells Canyon NRA (working on motor vehicle use map), Subpart A (minimum road analysis, review done by end of year).
- 40th Annual Hells Canyon NRA celebration this year.



John Allen – Deschutes National Forest

- Deschutes is one of the most recreated and managed forests, with 70 in community wildfire protection plans, with 12,000 acres in timber and 20,000 hazardous fuel reductions – annually.
- Lots of partnerships and collaboration heading to broad community support – goal to continue pushing in this direction.
- Recreation and tourism is a driver in Central Oregon, combined with healthy, resilient, and actively managed forests.
- Partnership include: steelhead and salmon in Whychus and Metolius, Children’s Forest of Central Oregon, Motorized Trail program, Forest Restoration Collaborative, Wilderness Collaborative, Central Oregon Fire Management (joint USFS and BLM fire suppression), Redmond Air Center with the cache, tankers, etc.
- Invasive EIS – with Ochoco, Deschutes – focuses on early detection of weeds and a rapid response. Designed so that – instead of specific sites descriptions - if the conditions are analyzed in the document, then no new NEPA would be required.

The challenge is to keep up with both need and recreation impacts. Road funding is down 50% while use is up. Transportation is just about hauling logs – its about getting to recreation and other sites in the forest – Congress hasn’t quite made that shift. While we build new ATV and biking trails, we need state ATV grants, for example, to make it happen and to manage it.

Don Gonzales – Vale BLM

See handout, plus

- Baker Gun Club wants the title for the range; need to wait for sage-grouse plan to see what options there are.
- Wild Horse – only 2 of 7 herds are within AML. Washington Office is not currently allowing temporary gathers.
- OR Trail Interpretive Center – approached by the Grand Geysers Hotel – to see if BLM would allow the hotel to purchase 15 permits a month, and then let all hotel visitors in for free. Only 26% currently pay because of senior passes. Interested in seeing what people think?

Joani Bosworth – Umatilla NF

See handout

Audrey Matsumonji – Malheur NF

- The Malheur will be working jointly with the Prineville BLM on a Wild Horse Territory Analysis.
- 3 Vegetation projects are in process – Wolf, Elk 16 and Mosquito. Expecting a draft decision in April – May, 2015. These would thin timber, work on aquatic restoration and stream enhancement and build and decommission roads.
- 10-year Stewardship contract – continue to work on this, with task order #3 issued in April.
- Weeds EIS is expected out at the end of April.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION



Terry – Pass

Art – Pass

Erica – FS/BLM are the authors for authorizing hydropower licensing terms and conditions on the development (Mason – Baker, Warm Springs – Malheur, etc.). Would like a discussion on what are the legacy impacts – maybe in October or on the Hells Canyon field trip? How can we use the process to address mitigation that should be developed to deal with hydropower effects? Response: tie in with Christian Bonano – regional hydropower development at the FS.

Chris – Wheeler County has a lot of habitat on the historic range for sage-grouse; so far, the state is not addressing potential, just core habitat. Lots going on with sage-grouse, though.

Ben – pass

Randy – Regional Solution Center work overlaps with RAC a bit – look at projects with jobs and retention. They can submit 4 projects to the governor – biomass, Columbia River water withdrawal, Pace and Scale and Wallowa-Whitman to address all issues on NF, and Wyden is looking at the Malheur lumber to expand and be flexible – might impact how the FS does smoke management, etc. John Day River Basin, Eastern OR and OR parks are developing “Cottonwood Crossing Summer Institute.”

Steve – discovery of 1st People in North America about 2-3,000 years earlier than thought (before Paisley caves). 105 years on Railroad in Deschutes Canyon this year.

Greg – ODFW hired a new director (Kurt Melcher); At the next legislative session, ODFW is looking a fee increase (haven’t done it in the last 6 years). Fee package is part of the budget. Will need feedback. Cougar hunting with hounds – still in legislation. ODFW is looking at wolf delisting – we’re meeting population targets. Collecting information on 500 mule deer does in the Blue Mtn zone – will be following movement over 3 year period.

Tim – Adding to new wildlife area on the Deschutes River (about 10K acres) with mitigation funds from Ruby Pipeline and Pelton. Will be managed for fish and wildlife. Will make about 22K acres of public access with BLM land.

Jim – putting \$ into Whychus creek and dam removal to bring salmon back to the area.

Curious about what’s happening with fish making it to Lake Billy Chinook? Why aren’t they returning at expected levels?

Kevin – Bravo Bentonite tabled operations due to material price – it’s a fragile economic venture. Mining in general, the cost of production is increasing and you can’t get enough out of the product to make it worthwhile.

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.

