

**JOHN DAY-SNAKE ADVISORY COUNCIL  
SUMMARY OF MEETING**

February 16, 2012

The John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 8:05 A.M. on February 16, 2012, at the Umatilla National Forest Supervisor's Office. Donald Gonzalez welcomed members, visitors, and presenters.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

**Council members present:**

- ✓ Adriane Borgias/Transportation/Rights-of-Way
- ✓ Terry Drever-Gee/Energy & Minerals
- ✓ Daniel Forsea/Grazing Permittees
- ✓ Michael Hayward/Commercial Timber
- ✓ Art Waugh/Developed Recreation & OHV  
Bill Lang/Archaeology & History
- ✓ Jim Reiss/Dispersed Recreation
- ✓ Dave Riley/Wildlife & Wild Horse & Burro
- ✓ Tim Unterwegner/Dispersed Recreation
- ✓ Berta Youtie/Environmental Groups
- ✓ Lawrence Brown/State Resource Agency  
Jeanne Burch/Elected Official
- ✓ Greg Ciannella/State Resource Agency
- ✓ Pat Dunham/Public-at-Large
- ✓ Patricia Gainsforth/Public-at-Large

**Federal managers attending were:**

- ✓ Don Gonzalez, Vale District Manager
- ✓ Anita Bilbao/Acting Prineville District Manager
- ✓ Kate Klein/Ochoco Forest Supervisor
- ✓ Joanie Bosworth/for Umatilla Forest Supervisor
- ✓ Mike Montgomery/ for Malheur Forest Supervisor
- ✓ Tom Montoya/ for Wallowa-Whitman Forest Supervisor

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.

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Others present for all (or a portion) of the meeting were: Mark Wilkening, Pam Robbins, Kevin McCoy, Mark Pierce, Chris Parkins,

Visitors: Randy Jones

### **DFO REPORT**

Gonzalez thanked everyone for coming and declared a quorum. He noted that a number of the resource plans are coming to the point where RAC input is essential. He reviewed the rules of conduct for the meeting.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST –**

Travel documents should be submitted to Mark Wilkening including mileage. He needs routing information for ACH deposits, and no reimbursements will be made without that information.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 17-18, 2012 in Baker City. Agenda items proposed are: Blue Mountain Forest Plan (Tom Montoya) {allow for subgroup to convene and develop suggested comments}, John Day Basin Final (Monte Kuk), Stepdown Veg EIS (TBD), Malheur Travel Management (Mike Montgomery), potential update of Deschutes/Ochoco/Crooked River Grassland vegetation plan (Kate Klein)

### **UPDATE ON JOHN DAY RMP – Anita Bilbao**

The John Day Final has been delayed for one month, to take into account the national Greater sage grouse direction; incorporating State strategy and national BLM guidance. The team is cross-walking the two plans so that the John Day plan does not have to be amended.

Review of delays and happenings since the prior RAC meeting: Trout Unlimited had inquired about special treatment of the South Fork area. Any Special Designation would need to be through Congressional action, and the current plan would provide guidance to meet some of the goals. Those issues are being resolved, and the final ROD should be published by September 2012. It will include a short overview of the process being used to acknowledge the national guidance and State strategy, and account for where it may affect management practices. Those efforts will be documented in an appendix to the plan to incorporate it.

The plan appendix is being completed in concert with Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, and when that is complete, the RAC will be asked to provide advice as need when issues arise. Prineville does not currently have core habitat.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Anita will send a copy of Monte Kuk's PowerPoint to Mark Wilkening for forwarding to RAC members.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Mark Wilkening will forward the Final John Day EIS to RAC members when it becomes available.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Anita will get background on the South Fork issue to Mark Wilkening for forwarding to RAC members.

**Q:** Was the national strategy a big change?

**A:** Not really; it was just important to make sure that all aspects were considered and that there was no conflict that could be problematic.

**Q:** Will there be any further public involvement at this point?

**A:** No. This is simply an interagency coordination effort. There will be the standard 30-day protest period in April for the Final EIS, but with the extensive public interaction to this point, it should be complete.

**Q:** What will be the John Day Basin subgroup role in the future?

**A:** Group will be involved mostly with the implementation once it is final. They will only be needed if issues arise during the on-the-ground phase of the plan's direction. The subgroup's role is largely fulfilled at this point.

**Q:** In the BLM process, do you have to have earlier involvement with the plan effort to have standing to file a protest?

**A:** Recent court cases have included "interested parties." In the past, if you weren't taking part in the process, you did not have standing. The DFO will look for further clarification.

**Q:** If the RAC sees something that needs a comment, can Anita take it back to the plan group?

**A:** Yes.

### **BAKER DRAFT RMP SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT– Adriane Borgias**

The draft letter went to RAC members, and subgroup met by conference call. Once the final version of the letter was completed, more input was provided that has not been incorporated. The RAC needs to determine what they want their letter to do/be. If there is consensus on topics, a letter can reflect a unanimous perspective. Points that go beyond the consensus remarks could be raised by members in individual letter to the Baker Field Office. Another alternative is to do a letter that a majority of the quorums could endorse. The RAC decided to try to reach consensus. If unable to get there, compose what the majority can agree to.

Proposed revisions to the letter state:

Appendix 3.5, the classification of grazing allotments states there are 99 grazing allotments that have no evaluations done as to rangeland standards. Of these 152,167 acres, 93,125 acres do not meet standards. We would like to see these acres put in as a priority, and evaluations done in a timely manner.

Ash Grove Cement Co is a major contributor to the Baker County economy since 1979. The 0.3% mining employment cited for Baker County (p 3-255) is inaccurate. Ash Grove, operating at full capacity (2006), employed 116 people with an annual payroll of \$6 million (Ferns 2009). In addition, Ash Grove adds revenue to Baker County property and personal taxes. The statement

demonstrates that the information in the draft EIS is inaccurate. Please review and correct the economic data in regard to minerals.

With respect to grazing allotments, the plan should focus on goals that lead toward improvements and not prescriptive requirements. In many situations, private lands are interspersed with public lands. Private landowners could react to strict requirements that may in fact have unintended negative consequences. Encourage permit holders to attend education on Proper Functioning Condition.

Motion proposed and seconded: RAC approves the letter as corrected.

Unanimous concurrence

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Adriane will forward the final version of the letter to Berta and to Mike for signature and submission to the Baker Planning Team.

### **UPDATE ON BAKER DRAFT RMP – Kevin McCoy, Mark Pierce**

There was question about the Denny Flat use.

**Q:** Is it possible to separate the OHV area use from conflict with bird habitat?

**A:** Historic use has included ATV recreation and training area because of its unique qualities. Its proximity to bird habitat and a rare plant species are concerns. The particular lupine in the area is dependent on soil disturbance, so its population doesn't vary between the enclosure area and the ATV use area. The main threat to the plant seems to be invasive species. It seems that the uses (well-managed) can co-exist. The intent would only permit uses that don't threaten the values the ACEC was designated to protect.

**COMMENTS:** Kudos. This seems to seek common ground instead of polarizing.

**COMMENTS:** The subgroup liked Alternative 1 but had recommendations for some changes.

**Q:** Are the traditional use seasons of ATV use and plant life seasons in conflict?

**A:** There is still more data to gather, but weeds (white-top) are a major factor. That could limit ATV use so that the weeds aren't spread more widely. With the new herbicide options available for weed treatment, the District may be able to address noxious plants more effectively.

**Q:** Is there a protocol for monitoring?

**A:** Specific requirements for monitoring are listed in the plan so that specific relevant values can be protected.

**Q:** If it's an ACEC, can the BLM still go in there to treat weeds? Is it possible to go in there with new herbicides and treat for three years or so before ATVs would be allowed entry?

**A:** Yes; as a matter of fact, the white-top is now being treated in preparation for more intensive treatment.

**COMMENTS:** The statement on 303d waters may tie our hands in how to manage the resource if implemented. It doesn't give flexibility for when conditions change. Goals are essential and good, but regulations may prevent beneficial use. Stubble height can vary and still be adequate; measuring it at different times or when conditions shift can be problematic.

**Q:** Who sets the AUM rate every year?

**A:** Congress does that.

**COMMENTS:** The appendices show many allotments that were not evaluated and 93,000 acres that don't meet rangeland standards. This should be a priority.

**RESPONSE:** The Vale District process for renewing allotments is lengthy and the acres cited are probably miscellaneous small lots. Right now they're focused on the Powder River area and there is another re-permitting area on the agenda before the Baker Miscellaneous Parcels will be analyzed. The Vale range staff has been consolidated so that their efforts are more coherent and comprehensive.

**COMMENTS:** The RACs were established to look at rangeland standards. The efforts of the Vale District Manager are appreciated, as they focus their energies more holistically. The economic assessment in the plan about minerals is not sufficient; it doesn't even address Ash Grove Cement or gold mining or other mineral aspects in the plan.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Mark will explore the possibility of a field visit to look at Ash Grove and some miscellaneous grazing parcels near Denny Flat so that the RAC can clearly visualize the situation.

**COMMENTS:** Precluding all grazing could actually damage the resource the BLM is trying to protect. If ranchers sell their land because they can't graze it, new owners could come in who may not grasp the sensitivity of the resource.

## **COTTONWOOD STATE PARK PLAN - Chris Parkins**

The park development at Cottonwood is exciting. Oregon Parks is working with an interdisciplinary group on the plans there. The park has much to offer for recreation, wildlife, cultural, fish, hunting, bird-watching, and other values. Limitations include integrating the rules for wild and scenic rivers, Threatened and Endangered Species, inventory and development. They're very grateful to the Western Rivers Conservancy for all their efforts at cleanup, inventory and overall coordination. Logical development would be centered at the Murtha Ranch site: keeping visual impacts low and retaining the primitive aesthetic of the area. Next goals are improvements at the Burris Wayside, and later development at the Hay Creek site. The comprehensive plan is available online; few printed versions were produced. The trails network will include the existing ones, with fairly easy development of others to capture scenic values. They're making a conscientious effort to direct the public to places they'll enjoy and limit access to areas that are vulnerable to damage. They have been coordinating carefully with the Warm Springs Tribe to protect their highest priorities. Interpretive topics could include the tribal history, geologic features, and role of working landscapes. Recreational pursuits include river rafting, hiking, biking, bird-watching, fishing, limited camping, equestrian use and more.

Opening is planned for September 2013 with basic amenities; the goal for other development is over 20-year span. This park has had the most public outreach of any park. Condon, Moro, Bend and Portland have been key sites for that public scoping. The final hearing was last month, so the Commission has heard comments and had the opportunity to add any concerns. The Land-Use approval process has begun with Grant & Gilliam Counties. Grazing is a big concern, and the Parks will have easements for existing permittees; work for fire & emergency services is developed so that the increased visitation can be dealt with. Oregon Solutions Group has designated a welcome center at this park, so they're seeking grants for development. It could be the hub for other dispersed tourism. The website dedicated to Cottonwood Canyon State Park <http://cottonwoodcanyon.wordpress.com/>

**Q:** Is access going to be permitted to the Hay Creek Road?

**A:** People would have to walk about a mile on the road there.

**Q:** Will there be permanent staff at the park?

**A:** Yes. The park manager and park ranger were approved before a hiring freeze went into effect. The long-range goal is 5-6 people.

**Q:** At one time there was an idea for a park at Clarno. Is that still on the radar screen?

**A:** Haven't heard of it.

**Q:** Is Oregon State Parks & Recreation looking at agriculture agreements in that area?

**A:** It's possible.

**Q:** Where is the process on the BLM land transfer? Is there a timeline for all that?

**A:** Have requested RPP land transfer, but are also drafting a cooperative land management agreement for the adjoining areas, to better coordinate policy. Time window, but will get info.

**Q:** What's the plan for water rights on that property?

**A:** The parks department has that, and will use those for irrigation, development, etc. Looking at their needs and the options for leasing the rights out that they won't need.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:** None.

## **MANAGER'S UPDATES**

Joani Bosworth, Umatilla NF: The Forest is excited about the new collaborative; looking at large vegetation management project and young stand development projects: one moist and one dry. Moving to their new office begins May 2012, so some service disruption could occur.

Mike Montgomery, Malheur NF: Travel management Plan comment period should open in July. Blue Mountain Forests plan draft should be out in April. The Forest received a 10-year funds

grant for Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration, to thin forested lands for forest resiliency. Most of those funds will go to contracts for biomass removal and forest treatments.

Anita Bilbao, Acting Prineville District: Completed the public comment period for the Newberry EGS demonstration project EA in coordination with DOE & Deschutes NF, and a contractor is processing comments. Prineville is planning a March issue date. They'll also start the scoping process for the Badlands Wilderness plan soon.

Vale District, Donald Gonzalez: Two alternatives for Boardman to Hemingway will avoid core habitat completely. Public meetings for sage grouse were completed; comment period extended. Trail Center piloted a change in hours which seems to be working well. Attendance and gift shop sales have increased. Representative Walden will be having a town hall there soon.

Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman NF: Litigation on Dooley Mountain and Big Pine prompted withdrawal of the decision. They're moving forward with an EA in next year or so. The Sled Springs litigation was settled re: OHV use on Wallowa; guidance for how trails will be used. Vegetation litigation is still in court; Forest is hoping for a determination in next few months. The Washington Office briefing for Blue Mountain is scheduled for the first week in March. Mid-April is the target timeline for issuing the revision. Many questions emerged on the travel management plan; the Forest expects to issue a decision by middle of March. Team is still determining how to deal with effects within 300 feet of designated roads. The Snow Basin Landscape project target ROD by end of March. It is important to the local economy. The North Fork Burnt River ROD is also expected in spring; the Forest is collaborating with the Department of Environmental Quality.

Kate Klein, Ochoco NF: Invasive weeds EIS for the Ochoco/Deschutes/Crooked River Grassland is being finalized; estimated April/May timeline. August projects under the decision. Forest is a year or so behind, but trying to convene a collaborative group in the Wolf Creek area.

## **MEMBER ROUNDTABLE:**

Dan Forsea: Appreciates this group and the range of perspectives. Concerned about the travel management and stubble-height rules for allotments. Maybe modify signs to say "Permitted Uses Only."

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Travel management subgroup will look at options for signage allowing permitted uses for access on allotments, and report their findings to the full RAC.

Adriane Borgias: Nothing

Larry Brown: Pass.

Greg Ciannella: The resources within the 8,000 acres of the Cottonwood site are amazing, with 1,000 acres of bottomland. While much is there, it needs a lot of work to deal with weed infestations and some neglect. Western Rivers did a lot of work before the property was transferred. They're focusing lots of energy on Hay Creek to restore it on several fronts. State Parks is tracking the progress there. Phase I development at the old Murtha Ranch has also begun, with access route, including vegetative screening, etc. Terraces being reseeded with

native species; there are several species of weeds that State Parks is working with the county to deal with. Esau Canyon has very nice wetlands up the draw and some planting is taking place to restore stream function. Cottonwood and Alder are some of the saplings being planted in the area.

**Q:** What about the BLM grazing permits in the area?

**A:** There is no grazing occurring right now on park property. Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) has opted to not graze their permit the last three years. State Parks has completely fenced Hay Creek to keep cattle out of there. However, State Parks has little experience overseeing grazing.

**COMMENT:** It's important to manage the grazing as far as timing, herd size, and types of cattle. For a permit that the holder does not exercise, they have three years to rest land, and can apply to extend that while they do restoration.

**Q:** Did WRC simply keep a fee-simple parcel and the grazing permit?

**A:** Not sure, but that is likely.

**COMMENT:** Grass banks are not the answer to every situation. Depending on the terrain, it can be totally unsatisfactory.

Berta Youtie: Just got a contract to look at aquatic weeds in Deschutes and Jefferson counties. They found Eurasian Water Milfoil, which is dangerous. Please watch for this to catch it early.

Patricia Gainsforth: Working a lot with conflict resolution between neighbors over resource issues. There is a great hunger for jobs, and small enterprise business facilitation (Siroli model) can really help people.

Jim Reiss: Pass.

Tim Unterwegner: Pass

Dave Riley: Nothing.

Terry Drever-Gee: Great to see the BLM/FS working closely together on mining issues. The new Regional Geologist came in to see the groundwork and how to make the process work.

Pat Dunham: Involved with native fisheries, and it looks like the fish populations have nearly tripled in some areas, thanks to the efforts of land managers and Fish & Wildlife Service

Mike Hayward: Wallowa area effort to protect the East Moraine Lake from commercial development. The last operating sawmill in Wallowa County has closed. County bought the mill site and with Oregon funds, are leasing to the firewood/post & pole plant. The small-scale co-gen facility could create 30 short-term jobs. When done, that could expand to more than 60, making a product people need from a resource the forest needs to dispose of.

Art Waugh: The biggest change this year for the OHV community is that side-by-sides were taken out of Class II and placed in Class IV. Oregon has phased in an age requirement for safety training, so eventually everyone will have to possess the safety card or risk getting a citation. Operators younger than 16-years on-street-legal vehicles must wear helmets. Brochures are available through Oregon Parks and Recreation. At the January statewide OHV meeting, the director surfaced the possibility of a mandatory Federal OHV permit. They're brainstorming the particulars of how that type of program would work to fund area development & maintenance and manage use.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Mark Wilkening will email the direct deposit authorization to the full RAC.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Tom Montoya will send a draft version of the Blue Mountain to subgroup members as soon as it's available in mid-March.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** The Blue Mountain Forest Plan subgroup will meet on May 16 to \*develop comments for presentation to the full RAC.

**\*\*\*ACTION\*\*\*** Mark and Don will prepare the agenda specifying the info that's needed from the RAC, and provide pre-work materials if available.

**COMMENT:** The Malheur Weed Plan materials should be coming to the subgroup when it's available.

### **MEETING EVALUATION:**

RAC looked at the RMP so that the specialists could address specific items they had questions on.

Institutional knowledge of the RAC members was very useful in scenarios where managers are new to the geographic area.

The briefings the RAC receives are very useful, but there is rarely a question where the RAC can really dig into the elements of a plan proposal. As an advisory council, it would be useful to be clear about what the RAC can actually advise on.

All comments are equal, but the agencies realize the value of the RAC's input and give those comments greater weight.

Impressed with the give and take and respect shown to each other within the RAC.

Easement, access and signage issues need to be on the agenda for this group.

Appreciates the opportunity to talk directly with the agency people informally, and provide appropriate contacts on topics, etc.

Grazing is such a key to resource planning and that process; it's a challenge to educate people about the role they play in maintaining landscape health.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 P.M.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Donald Gonzalez  
Vale District Manager

{RAC Chair}  
Chair, John Day-Snake RAC

These minutes will be formally considered by the Council at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.