

JOHN DAY-SNAKE ADVISORY COUNCIL
SUMMARY OF MEETING

May 17, 2012

The John Day-Snake Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was convened for its meeting at 8:05 A.M. on May 17, 2012, at the Conference Room of the Geiser Grand Hotel, Baker City, Oregon. Don Gonzalez welcomed attendees.

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**

Vacant/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**
- ✓ **Carol Benkosky/Prineville District Manager**
- ✓ **Kate Klein/Ochoco Forest Supervisor**
- ✓ **Kevin Martin/Umatilla Forest Supervisor**
- ✓ **Patti Hammett/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.

Others present for all (or a portion) of the meeting were:

Elizabeth Sheeler, ***

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Second call for nominees closes June 4, 2012. Bill Lang will not be completing his term representing archaeological/historical interests, so outreach encouraged to locate candidates for that vacancy.

RECREATION FEES – Carol Benkosky

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) requires a public advisory group to evaluate proposals for fees on federal lands. The Forest Service (FS) has been managing this function since enactment of FLREA, but they have been unable to fill their RAC vacancies. The BLM added this authority to our existing RAC charters. The Oregon/Washington RACs can only advise on fees within their geographic jurisdiction, and they know the geographic, resource and social values of their areas. The BLM needs to know how the John Day-Snake RAC would prefer to accomplish this goal: using the entire RAC, a subgroup of the RAC, or some other avenue. Today we will sketch out a pending idea so the RAC is familiar with it, and can help shape the proposal for fee collection on the John Day River. FLREA applies to fees for developed recreation sites and opportunities: campgrounds, rental cabins or day use sites; authorizes standard amenity fees, expanded amenity fees, and special recreation permits (but only authorizes an advisory role for non-commercial permits). Our agencies cannot do entrance fees, standard fees for youth under 16, or for parking at areas without facilities or overlooks or for pass-through travel. Fees must be reinvested in the local fee area; 85% directly to site and 15% can be for oversight to administer the program. Concessionaire- and contractor-operated sites are exempt from the FLREA process. Other public involvement is included in fee considerations as well: media, site users, public notice.

The process includes notifying the RAC about the request, notifying the public through many avenues, and gathering all that input for the formal presentation to the RAC. It has been five years since a fee proposal has had a forum for consideration in this region.

The John Day River Recreation basic fees are intended to protect and enhance outstandingly remarkable recreation values. The business plan requires adequate funds to maintain sites, protect public safety, administer the program, and add amenities that will enhance the recreational experience. It would pay for site-cleanup, staffing at put-in/take-out points, provide trash service at Clarno & Cottonwood, improve facilities onsite, and provide a law enforcement presence to protect the resource and expand family-friendly options.

Boater permits would be per-person with minimum of two; in-season charges for the Service Creek-to-Tumwater Falls section, with day-use being half the cost of overnight. Congressional appropriations have to be the primary source of program dollars, but proposed fees would comprise 40% of the cost of protecting or increasing program services. Prineville would like to bring the full proposal to the RAC's fall meeting for their recommendations, to be able to implement for the 2013 season.

The agencies need the RAC to determine how they would like to proceed. The presentation of the business plan could be sent as pre-work in sufficient time for members to gather sensing from their stakeholders. Social media is helping to make this a hot issue in Wheeler County. Shuttle services, outfitters, and law enforcement will all be affected, and it can be contentious in rural communities. Some adjustments may be needed on the technology end to prevent “gaming the system.” The goal is to assure program compliance and foster appropriate behaviors. There needs to be a mechanism to assure that commercial operator fees are set at reasonable levels in comparison to individual boater passes.

The John Day subgroup may not be the right forum for fee considerations, since other sites may come up during the time this RAC is authorized to consider fees. When a business plan is ready, the full RAC should get it so they can funnel back any considerations to the subgroup. This would help in formulating the final concept. There is a provision in FLREA for automatic increases to offset overall rise in program operations.

Riley: Motion to form a subgroup for a two-year term specific to recreation fees; Unterwegner seconded. Unanimously adopted

***Berta & Carol will brainstorm @ lunch to develop the strategy for forming subgroup.

BLUE MOUNTAIN FOREST PLAN & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT – Tom Montoya

The three forest revision covers 5.3 million acres. Notice of proposed action went out Mar 2010. Over 60 workshops have been held in the past eight years. Focus is restoration of dry forest types; thinning to reduce risk to affected communities from wildfire. Issues are access; economic/social well-being; live***. They are outcome-focused. There are six alternatives (including the “no action” option; ‘F’ is the preferred one. Alt B focuses on resilient landscapes and minimizes the size of wilderness acreage. Alt C increases non-motorized recreation and emphasized backcountry recreation. Alt D increases motorized access and more active forest management. Alt E balances diversity of recreation opportunities and commodity outputs. Alt F is similar to E but

Workshops planned for August after draft is released; 90-day comment period; working toward final EIS in July 2013. That will include ESA Consultation. Will be in “objection” process rather than appeal process, and hope to resolve all that by Oct 2013 so ROD can be issues Nov 2013. Disk with draft will be given to Blue Mtn subgroup today so they can begin review and highlight items for the full RAC.

Are most of the concerns for aquatic restoration and other scientific questions addressed in the plan? Intent of the new strategy is to consolidate all the prior strategies based on priority watersheds and an entire suite of considerations. Want the alternatives to be compatible with required recovery plans. Exploring biomass and carbon issues to prepare for those concerns.

W/W TRAVEL

The decision document didn’t completely resolve some key questions that the Forest considered as implementation level, but numerous questions arose. The FS withdrew the decision so that the plan could get more intense review. The maps may not have been detailed enough and adjoining private lands brought questions. The forest is preparing more detailed maps so that the public can

feel confident that they know where they are on the landscape and what the access level is. Instead of the current eight maps, there may be 16 to get finer scale. The Forest would like to put road numbers on all closed roads, so people can tell what is open and what is closed. There are other map areas (South Fork Burnt River, Baker City Watershed, Sled Springs and more) where decisions were already made; maps left them blank, which could leave access status unclear. New maps will show all status, plus adjacent ownerships between jurisdictions. There will also be other map products (overlays) that contain essential info above the base map, to include items incorporated in the EA that weren't conveyed visually outside the text/tables ie. fishery subbasins, etc.

“Social circles” reference specific places where there is great interest expressed; public may not necessarily take the same stance, but high levels of attention are focused on these areas and their allowable uses. These aspects are linked to buttons on the webpage, and the Forest is trying to get that material publicly available to promote transparency. Agency is also working on 15 *white papers* that discuss particular questions that have been raised (ex. firewood, mining exploration, ML1 road clarification, and other topics that have surfaced during plan development). They will be online during the plan outreach time. Plan meetings with each of the affected counties to cover any differences between plan and the local govt preferred alternative. Meetings with stakeholder groups would also be part of the outreach across this summer. Also plan more general public meetings, and trying to finalize the details for these for mid-late July. Would like to have a Supplemental EIS out for review/comment period before developing new ROD. Likely happen this fall.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Interested in WSR proposals. New ideas for proposed designations keep popping up whenever a new plan comes in. General usage keeps getting squeezed into smaller and smaller areas, so that the accessible areas will get more and more crowded. Retrieving game and other customary uses are

The restrictions have an economic impact as more and more land gets closed off to productive uses in rural economies. All new wealth comes from the ground by extracting products; harvesting vegetation, mining, ranching or other needed occupations help the populations of the US in multiple ways.

DESCHUTES/OCHOCO GRASSLANDS VEGETATION PLAN R.O.D. – Kate Klein

The area has been operating under 1998 policy decisions. They were limited to infestations ID'd at that time. In 2004-2005, the region released a decision on analysis of weed treatment, so the EA began 8 years ago. The 2008 decision was appealed and then did Supplemental EIS. It provides option to treat up to 16,000 acres/year over 15 years, and gives more latitude to treat more acres using early detection and rapid response to new infestations. It also expands options for herbicides to get most effective remedies. New products are included with online info. The major differences between the two alternatives were related to riparian areas. The unit chose the one that would allow treating invasive aquatic species. Quarries seem to be a key area for dispersal of invasives. Can the unit require washing stations to clean vehicles before intersecting Federal land/waters?

JOHN DAY BASIN FINAL – Monte Kuk

Discussion of the current timeline and differences between draft and the disk with the final. Maps are expandable with clicking. Plan is out for public comment right now. Hope to have the ROD signed by 10/1. The Biological Assessment may hold up the process as it clears through NMFS, but the District hired a marine biologist to help write that portion of the plan. One change from original docs and now is the State Sage Grouse strategy. JDB does not have occupied habitat, but there is some historic habitat. The appendices include how that was analyzed. No change to lands w/wilderness char. OHV has garnered the greatest interest, and there are some changes. Doc includes interim travel plan to take effect until the District develops their final travel management plan. Roads ID'd for closure totals 742 miles, largely short segments and acres that are land-locked. Because the BLM has no authority on the 250 miles on private land, those are designated "closed" for agency use. Open for public access is 333 miles of roads. Some areas required rights-of-way applications for roads typically used to access private property; there are at least 11 that are in this situation for property or grazing allotments. Page 24 of the final highlights the changes from draft to final. Hours in Little Canyon Mountain were modified slightly and shooting restrictions. Rudio Mountain had some triggers added for potential limits if the resource needs that. Subgroup may want to disband after the plan is approved, but the implementation process will need the RAC's assistance.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No additional public in attendance.

SUBCOMMITTEE WORK PERIOD

Two persons from each category for the RecRAC subgroup: Art Waugh & tentatively Terry Drever-Gee, Tim Unterwagner & Jim Reiss, Pat Dunham & Patricia Gainsforth.

Proposed process will be DM presents to full RAC, identifying desire to engage the RAC in developing a presentation. Subcommittee will meet w/appropriate agency staff concurrent w/public scoping. Business plan w/b developed for submission for SO, WO review. A meeting or conference call will be scheduled for subgroup to review results. Then full RAC receives proposal & subgroup recommendation; RAC votes and proposal is implemented or declined so that Congress decides.

Amended motion was adopted unanimously.

FEDERAL OFFICIAL UPDATES

Tom M – Malheur – Topics were in the Blue Mtn briefing

Kevin – UMA – office move taking place today. Opening tomorrow. RAC will meet there in Nov. Collaborative is working with the Forest on that; led by NFkJD Watershed Council & PSU consensus center. Positive energy & good interest surrounds this effort. A dry forest project on Heppner RD (SW corner) and a moist forest one in headwaters of Umatilla area. Supplemental EIS for Cobbler II fuels reduction project on W/W Rgr Dist in Wallowa County will be issued tomorrow. South George project decision should be out in next three weeks.

Pattie Hammett – MAL – Mark Webb was voted out of office; sheriff will also be on ballot. Expect decision on travel mgt by end of the year. Collaboratives were successful with their proposal to receive \$2.5 million to implement those projects. The Prairie City RD is in a new sustainable building. DFS annct coming soon. Jon Gubels going back to R-1. Weeds program plan is on timeline to be issued by year end.

Kate – OCH – closing Rager Ranger Station; three employees there now, so duty station moving to Prineville. Evaluating whether there will be seasonal staffing or concessionaire or other methods for recreation services. Starting with a Crook County Collaborative group & C.O. Intergovernmental Council. Ochoco will hold a volunteer census for HMAs June 21-23.

Carol – PRD – The JD RMP and the fee proposal process were covered in the morning session. Cottonwood Canyon State Park vision included a request for 12,143 acres of RPP lands, but some of that acreage is within WSA or WSR designated areas, so discussions continue. They are eager to begin efforts for the Visitor Center, but it's important to manage the different jurisdictional areas in complementary ways. NEPA processes would have to be conducted for a land transfer of that property. Spring Basin wilderness progress has 3 land transfers still viable. All three are undergoing title review, valuations and other necessary steps. A large amount of site rehab was needed after last year's fire season. Much more complex than expected, and it will be fully monitored for effectiveness. The Priest Hole rehab effort was a major accomplishment. There is a cooperative agreement with ODFW at that Twickenham launch site to permit installation of a toilet facility.

Monica – WAW – Covered travel this morning. June 7 a group will meet in La Grande to decide if the WAW will start a Collaborative. Two entities would be the convenors: Wallowa Resources and Sustainable NW. Their joint proposal went to the Nat'l Forest Foundation for seed money to explore the potential of working together this way. Veg mgt programs in Baker Cty – snow Basin appeal period closed May 15. 8-9 appeals came in on this landscape-scale effort to thin and reduce fire hazard. Some aspen restoration is included, and riparian treatments in Eagle Creek area. Could include fencing.

Elizabeth Sheeler – very useful to attend these meetings and see what the agencies are working on and get first-hand updates on what the public would want to hear about.

DFO REPORT

District update sent as prework. The new Vegetation EA will not be completed this year. Pedro Mtn Decision Record did not get any appeals. Statewide EIS for Sage Grouse will need to be incorporated in the forthcoming planning documents. B2H work group meetings included discussion of the Sage Grouse strategy. There is a lot of public interest, and resource reports are due. The web page will include a FAQ page as material is compiled and researched. Apr 23 was Vale's 1st lightning fire; almost 11 sections. Ted Davis (Baker FM) is retiring June 30.

ROUNDTABLE

Tim – one issue from a year ago involves coord. Resource mgt plan at Murderer's Creek CRMP. BLM, Malheur NF, ODFW, & Dayville Grazing Assoc were involved in it. The ODFW people and Renee have discovered issues that may have been easier to resolve if CRMP was currently operating. Would like to see this in operation or at least considered.

Adriane – Nothing for the group.

Jeanne – Hoping that the JD river plan can navigate all the concerns that are being inserted into the discussion over social media and other routes.

Jim – BLM signs indicate “no vehicular travel allowed” when some areas grant access to permittees

Pat – Nothing

Art – WAW travel mgt plan to add boundaries that indicate adjoining jurisdictions is a great idea that should be adopted by all admin units. Will serve the public greatly. The MAL discussion prompts an idea to develop a uniform indicator that shows closed or open travel routes.

Mike – The SRS RACs have lapsed, but the delegation is working hard to reinstate those Title II RACs for a year or longer. The planning RACs might be able to perform that role to eliminate any delays in reappointing members to do those considerations.

Dave – Enjoyed working with RAC; inside and outside the official meeting mode. Available to all for questions or sources he may be able to answer.

Berta –OWEB has become a permanent entity and has recently held listening sessions across the state to gather input on the role people would like them to serve. Did small group sessions to gather more in depth feedback, and relayed that to all attendees. Waiting to see what comes of these inquiries. The Island was dedicated last week as a Nationally Significant *** Site. Crook Cty weed pull in July.

Greg – nothing news; happy to be a portal for the planning activities on Cottonwood Creek

Larry –

Patricia – serving with Warm Springs Tribe and is loving it. Enthused about the Collaboratives

AGENDA ITEMS FOR SEPTEMBER

Subcommittee work time for John Day Boater Pass and Blue Mountain subgroup

Greater Sage Grouse strategy update and decide what role RAC would want to take in those plans.

Baker RMP issues surfaced and timeline discussion for RAC.

Pine Creek/Clarno or Priest Hole restoration

*****ACTION*** Carol will confer with her DLT about relevant issues within the Prineville District.**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 P.M.

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

Donald Gonzalez
Vale District Manager

Berta Youtie
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.

Next Mtg in Central Oregon location TBA Sept 20-21.

Verify if Mike can be elected official when Jeanne leaves.

Kahneetah, Wilson Ranches retreat, Washington Family