

Rogue River User/Agency Meeting Notes

November 14, 2013 * 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Grants Pass Interagency Office

2164 NE Spalding Avenue * Grants Pass, Oregon

Public in Attendance: 13 in person & 8 by phone

Agency Attendees: Allen Bollschweiler, Nancy Schwieger, Tina Lanier, Phil Rheiner, Kai Allen, Becky Brown, Barbara Zurhellen, Colby Hawkinson, Shawn Clark, Lisa Byers, Merry Haydon, Bob Hemus, Ernie Fields, Jason Stanton, Derrick Johnson, Bonnie Million (facilitator), Shannon dePuglia and Vickie Whiteaker (notetakers).

Handouts - 2013 Wild Rogue River Use Report
2013 Rogue River Bear Observation Summary

Welcome and Announcements – Allen Bollschweiler & Nancy Schwieger

Introductions – All

Ground Rules – Bonnie Million

Agency Briefing – BLM & FS Staff

2013 Funding Challenges/2014 Projections – Allen Bollschweiler & Tina Lanier

The BLM and FS have suffered major budget cuts, sequestration, and a furlough. In 2013 we faced an 8% cut and we wound up with 6%. Next year could be as high as 10%. The Forest Service is under the same sequestration and expects to be short staffed.

BLM is prepositioned better for 2014. We have R.E.A dollars appropriated, and we have placed this year's seasonal employees on "Leave Without Pay" status so that we automatically reinstate them in case of another hiring freeze.

Q: How is R.E.A. money being used if you're short on help with toilet, monitoring, etc.?

A: We have a carry-over in R.E.A. dollars.

2013 Visitor Use – Becky Brown

Statistics showed about a 3,000 person drop in use between 2012 and 2013 (approx. 26%). The drop in use could be attributed to the fire and the furlough. During the furlough commercial boaters were able to operate and report use. Private boaters were also able to operate, but their use was not recorded due to lack of staffing.

C: Thank you for not closing the river and not barricading the put-in during the furlough.

Bear Survey - Nancy Schwieger

We are estimating that half the bears were reported this year as compared to 2012. Perhaps there was less reporting due to the fire and the furlough. Please continue to fill out the bear forms, whether you see good or bad behavior. All data is needed for evaluation of bear behavior by ODFW to determine action.

C: Thank you for the bear efforts, but please do something to address outfitters feeding bears.

Follow Up Items – Barbara Zurhellen

- Campsite Competition, Trail Hikers, Human Waste & Dogs

We have had several items on the meeting agendas for the past two years. We discussed campsite competition, trail hikers, human waste, and dogs in break out groups at the November 2012 User Meeting, gathered data, discussed at meetings, and came up with ideas to begin dealing with these items. We have increased our education through signage at the boat ramps, trail heads, Rand, website and information kiosks. We've created brochures and revised the campsite brochure, created an orientation video, and developed handouts to educate people about sharing campsites, LNT principles, packing in and packing out, and doggie etiquette. We will continue to look for ways to improve these ongoing issues that do not require additional planning or NEPA work and we welcome your suggestions throughout the year.

Q: Any rules for prevention of commercials regarding rabbit boats?

A: This is an ongoing issue, but there are currently no rules being made prohibiting rabbit boat.

C: Please consider instating a no runner/rabbit rule, commercials should stay with their group.

- Shuttle Permitting/Shuttle Routes

Addressing permits for shuttle operators is on hold, pending release of the new BLM SRP Handbook by the Washington D.C. office in 2014.

- Non-Regulated Use Season

We have been collecting visitor use numbers for two weeks prior and after the regulated use season May 15 to Oct 15 to see if the season needed to be extended due to reports of extremely high use on the weekends after Oct 15. This fall we were not able to collect the data because we had just gotten back from furlough. We did receive informal use reports. Our data thus far has not merited extending the season. We are looking into other means of collecting this data and will continue collecting use numbers in 2014.

Q: Does Federal Law still trump State Law regarding the use of medical marijuana on the river?

A: Yes

C: You should educate users on this subject.

Online Reservations – Colby Hawkinson

Estimated river development schedule from the State Office:

2013 – Complete John Day – deploy March 2014

2014 – Requirements/development for Lower Deschutes – deploy Lower Deschutes early 2015

2015 – Requirements/development for Rogue River – deploy Rogue River early 2016

Q: Is the reservation system for the lottery only or will it cover the whole system?

A: We will start with the lottery and may go system-wide.

C: The online system will be good for the lottery. Consider the details carefully for equity.

C: Encouraged to maintain usual pool start procedure and the no show waiting list.

New Starts/Pool Spaces – Colby Hawkinson

Starting in 2014 new starts picked up less than three weeks before launch date will require payment at time of reservation. Some of the reasoning includes the incentive to only pick up the amount of spaces people think they will actually use, to be more committed to their launch date, and less administrative processing time.

C: Suggestion to consider applying a 10 day rule instead of a 3 week rule.

Bear Camp Snow Plowing – Tina Lanier

Budgets are declining and all our projects and administration are competing for less and less money. We have paid anywhere from \$0-\$32,000 to plow snow on Bear Camp.

Q: A group of local businesses paid for Bear Camp to get plowed. Who was that group?
Someone should find out if they'd do it again.

Q: At one time the state was going to allocate funds to open Bear Camp, what happened to that funding?

Safety – Allen Bollschweiler

There were several deaths on the river in the beginning of the season which prompted BLM and FS to evaluate safety. In 2013 we increased safety awareness through actively handing out OSMB life jacket and whitewater information at Rand. We will continue to work on safety with Deputy Ernie Fields, Oregon State Marine Board. We intend to be more active in promoting safety and would like your suggestions.

C: We should have pay phones at Almeda and Grave Creek.

C: Phone companies have found it not cost effective to maintain public phones at Almeda. There are phones at Rand, a payphone at Galice, and radio phones at the Rogue River Ranch. Almeda has radio connection with Josephine County Parks Department.

Roads/Timber Hauling/Culvert Replacement – Phil Rheiner & Nancy Schwieger

Heavy equipment traffic can be expected on Bear Camp Road this spring. It will be signed. There may be delays on Galice Creek while the slide area is being addressed. There will also be work on the west end of Eden Valley Road. You can check the website and future Facebook site for updates.

Q: Why use a Facebook site when you can use the BLM site for updates?

A: A Facebook site will allow for faster updates and immediate notifications on updates to subscribers of the site.

Wild Rogue Wilderness Proposal – Kai Allen

Kai reviewed ~~the~~ both the House and Senate Wilderness Proposals, the Wild Rogue Expansion Act and the Restoring Healthy Forests Act.

Project Highlights – Nancy Schwieger & Phil Rheiner

The FS maintained and operated campgrounds and boat ramps to standard. The FS portion of the Rogue River Trail was opened with volunteer assistance. The BLM portion of the Rogue River Trail was opened by the BLM veteran fire crew and recreation staff. Maintenance of the Rogue River Trail was accomplished by Northwest Youth Corps, and BLM staff. The Rogue River Ranch will have potable water in 2014. The Winkle Bar boat replica will be placed mid-May. The toilet at Battle Bar should be operational in the spring. The rail replacement at the Rainie Falls Overlook is nearly finished.

C: Thanks to the Siskiyou Mountain Club for their volunteer work on the Mule Creek Trail.

Rogue River Ranch Restoration Project – Merry Haydon

Several buildings at the ranch are in need of repairs. Restoration work will take place in phases during the high use season for the next three years. This project will affect all users. The project schedule is as follows:

2014 – The tabernacle and blacksmith buildings will be closed.

2015 – The main house and museum will be closed. Items will be in storage.

2016 – The barn will be closed.

Q: Where is the funding coming from?

A: The project is funded by the BLM State Office.

Q: Do you need any volunteers?

A: This work will be completed by BLM engineers through contractors but if you're interested in volunteering for BLM we are happy to have your help and there are many opportunities available on the district.

Questions/Comments – All

C: You should consider adopting the Four Rivers Idaho system for the lottery. Rec.gov, works great.

C: The Use Report for October should say n/a not zero.

C: Will commercial outfitter meeting notes be on the website?

A: Yes

C: What are you going to do about campsite competition?

A: Bottom line is that we have yet to hear a solution that is fair for everyone. If we are to implement standards, they must be enforceable. We are open to suggestions.

C: The Main Salmon is a semi-reserved river and that seems to work well. Can't you just instate a rule against rabbit boating?

C: Rabbit boating is unacceptable.

C: Rabbit boating and campsite reservation are different.

C: Here are a couple of ideas to help eliminate campsite competition: 1) place outhouses in the smaller sites which will take pressure off the few large sites available with toilets 2) prohibit groups of less than 16 people to camp at a large site.

C: Rabbit boats are unique to the Rogue River.

C: Prepare to share should be practiced and more education might help.

Q: Why use Facebook with dwindling funds?

A: Facebook is a minimal investment, a simplified process, and a place to disseminate information quickly.

C: Thanks to Barbara Zurhellen for improving BLM/FS contact.

C: I don't like having separate meetings. During the furlough, I didn't appreciate locked bathrooms at Grave Creek, and locked bathrooms and Scat Machine at Foster Bar. Users would have been happy to clean the bathrooms. It feels like we're being punished for something that is completely out of our control. Regarding safety, I'm concerned that you'll soon be protecting us from our own resource. Why regulate leaving the canyon early? Don't regulate just for the sake of regulation.

A: Locking up facilities was not a local decision.

C: Open Bear Camp road as soon as possible.

Big Windy Fire - Derrick Johnson, ODF & Allen Bollschweiler, BLM

Derrick gave a summary of Southern Oregon fires and weather event leading up to the Big Windy Fire. On the night of July 26, 2013, a dry, single cell thunderstorm occurred. The next morning there were five fires in what was later called the Big Windy Complex. These fires started at ¼ to ¾ acres in size. The terrain in this area was steep, and there was a lack of road access.

Q: Were the trees I noticed that were cut along Bear Camp road hazard trees?

A: Yes, they may have been hazard trees or the preparation of a contingency line.

C: Thanks to ODF for the option of Text updates during the fire.

Q: Are you keeping the south side of the river closed?

A: Hazard trees were surveyed and are minimal. All sites on the river were opened. We have several years of dynamic river environment.

In general, BLM contracts with ODF for firefighting. In this particular case, the fires were near FS land as well, so BLM and FS managed the fire via ODF. The staff at ODF was handling some of the other fires in the area, and decided to contract Type 1 teams for the Big Windy Complex. The Type 1 teams were comprised of BLM and FS employees.

The fire traveled up river, along the bank in some cases. There were spot fires across the river, with some potential to lose containment. These spots were put out. In the earlier stages of the fire, our projections showed that all three local fires could merge.

We managed to get the rehab done right away while the people and equipment were on scene. Much of the downed trees were used in rehab projects. We do not anticipate doing salvage because of Late Successional Reserve. We may do some replanting in heavily burned areas. We will be doing After Action Review.

Q: What's going on with the fire break debris at Missouri Bar?

A: Were not done yet.

Q: Revenue numbers are not available this year. What's up with that?

C: Anyone interested in the numbers can see Phil after the meeting.

Bin List Items

Campsite Competition: We have not heard an enforceable and equitable solution to campsite competition.

C: Let's plan a meeting to talk about campsite competition exclusively.

A: We have had one in the past, and not many people showed up. Should we plan one for next year?

C: Let's work on it this year so we don't have to wait a year!

C: So, because you don't have a solution and you can't enforce it, you do nothing?

Q: How is it fair for some people to pay someone to rabbit boat on the river and others can't?

A: We have not heard a viable solution that works for all involved. We remain open to your suggestions and continued input.

Wrap Up – Allen Bollschweiler & Tina Lanier

Allen announced that the Oregon/Washington Resource Management Plan is our guide for managing resources, and it is currently being revised. This document will drive decisions for the next 20-25 years. The document can be found on our OR/WA website. You can specifically refer to the recreation section of the document, to see how to get involved.

Agency Follow Up and/or Action Items

Look at options to reduce campsite competition and practice of rabbit boating

Monitor visitor use pre/post regulated use season

Investigate Bear Camp snowplowing options

Increase safety awareness

Develop Facebook page for the Rogue River