

River Users Meeting*

November 5, 2008

Grants Pass Interagency Office

Agency Representatives:

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) –Abbie Jossie, Field Manager, Grants Pass Resource Area, Medford District, BLM; Jeanne Klein, Assistant Field Manager for Recreation and Engineering; Chris Dent, Medford District Recreation Lead; Louise Richards, Commercial Permit Administrator; Dave Ballenger and Todd Calvert, Park Rangers; Becky Brown, Interpretive Specialist

United States Forest Service (USFS) – Nancy Schwieger, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist and Alan Vandiver, District Ranger, Gold Beach Ranger District, Rogue River – Siskiyou National Forest, USFS.

Participants were asked to sign in at the door and provide BLM with their name and address. The following handouts were available:

- ✿ BLM Accomplishments – FY 2008
- ✿ BLM Specific cost Breakdown – FY 2008
- ✿ Forest Service Rogue River Fiscal 08 Spending
- ✿ 2008 Wild rogue River Use Report (May 15-October 15)
- ✿ (copies of any of these are available by calling Louise at 541-471-6648)

The agenda was posted on the wall:

- ✿ BLM River Program Changes
- ✿ Rogue River Fees
- ✿ 2008 Use
- ✿ 2008 Compliance Summary
- ✿ Discussion Topics
- ✿ Open Discussion

Abbie opened the meeting, all in attendance introduced themselves. A change in the recreation staff was presented. Chris Dent has taken a position in Medford as the Medford District Recreation Lead. Jeanne Klein has taken over for Chris as the Assistant Field Manager for Recreation and Engineering. This position oversees the River Program. Jeanne stated she actually started with the BLM, working in the River Program. Jeanne said she is looking forward to the coming years, getting to know everyone and all involved with the Rogue River.

*Notes compiled by Louise Richards

Abbie went over the slides (attached) - Overall it looks like use was down. There was a glitch with the fees and collections structure as the BLM instituted a new system. Not all of the fees collected for the USFS by the BLM have been transferred to the agency so the USFS could not report all of the fees that were transferred to them and the BLM is locked out of the new systems reports function so we could not obtain and offer that information either. We hope to see the new system up in a few weeks and to be able to access the data base for all the fees and collections information.

A few comments were made about how the fees are shown. It was asked that we (BLM and USFS) separate "Wild" section fees out from the "Recreation" section fees of the Rogue River. Also it was asked that we show the public permit fees and lottery application fees as well as the \$10.00 per client fee for the outfitters. One person felt the Agencies weren't showing the true picture of the cost of the program and they wanted to see the cost of the onboard river personal that are paid out of appropriated funds. One person said he is still waiting for the USFS to show where last year's fees went. Abbie pointed out that on the sixth slide, FY 08 BLM Collections, the Tour Boats are in the Recreation section, the 3% & \$10 is from the Wild section, the \$10 private is the Wild Section, the 3% Rec. is on the Recreation section and the Rec. Events Fees are other than river. Also the Lottery Application is the lottery application fees for the Wild Section. There seemed to be questions why the agencies could spend Fee Demo, moneys on other than Rogue River sites. Abbie explained that the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) (which was enacted December 8, 2004, replacing the Fee Demo program) reinvests a majority of fees back to the site of collection, but some of the collected money can, by law, go to other sites and toward the costs of administration. Those fees generated here are not obligated to be spent here anymore as it was with the Fee Demo program. Abbie stated that she knows fees are not popular, but BLM may need to look at an increase for recreation use permits (private floaters) and commercial clients. Because we are required to bring to the public the ideas of increased fees, an 11 person advisory council will be looking at fee proposals and make recommendations to the BLM and USFS.

There was a question as to why \$23,000 was spent by the USFS on plowing snow. It was agreed long ago that the Forest could save up to \$5,000 each year but spend no more than \$15,000 to plow Bear Camp Road. Nancy said she was not aware of that agreement and would track it better next year season. It was brought up from the audience that the information given out at the meeting should be mailed out ahead of time so there is time to look at the numbers and the participants could then come prepared to ask some intelligent questions. One slide shows that money is coming in from the Chetco, for the USFS, but how much goes out? Nancy did not have that information. Again it was stated that the Fee Demo program that the agencies were under no longer exists and the agencies, now under REA, are obligated to spend the recreation fees in areas other than where it was collected. At this point someone from the audience made the statement that there is really no need then for the agencies to show where the fees are going and perhaps it is time to look at issues rather than fees. There was a concern on raising fees that will be going to the big hole and not coming back to the site.

Commercial River Ranger Contacts - BLM's river rangers had more compliance trips this year than previous years. Over all most of the people and companies contacted were in compliance. That is a very positive thing. BLM Law Enforcement Officers floated the Wild Section 4 times. Those floats did result in a few citations. Two citations were issued for unlawful use of a recreation use permit (RUP) – the permits given to the private floater. One citation was issued for a portable toilet violation. The administrative action associated with these citations has been appealed. The BLM is working with the permittees in appeal process. It was asked that there be a better breakdown as to each time an outfitter is contacted. Need more information on Law Enforcement contacts – example what was litter in waterway, why 2 arrests. It was asked about using propane fire rings in the Wild Section. Todd said he had talked to the State Forestry department and they say those are ok (State Forestry is contracted by the BLM for our fire suppression). It was mentioned there should be better cleanup efforts near Morrison's pond.

Business Process Changes - BLM is thinking of changing some of the process of the no – show waiting list (NSWL). For example, when someone who is on the NSWL and the spaces become available the person needs to be ready at that time to pay for the spaces, show the toilet and have the people and boat information so they are ready to go. If they are not ready then the spaces go to the next person on the waiting list who is present and can launch. It was asked why the private permits can be changed so easily. Abbie stated that the private permits, or RUPs, are each a onetime issuance, as compared to the commercial permits that are presently issued for up to five years. These permits can be changed also.

Shuttle Company Permitting – Abbie stated that at this point the agencies are just looking into the possibility of shuttle permitting, this is not close to implementation, if it even is determined to do so. It had been ascertained that the BLM does not have the authority to permit shuttle companies under the O&C Act. The O&C Act address timber and timber hauling only. BLM may not permit shuttle companies through a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) either. The USFS can permit shuttle companies under a Special Use Permit. At this time the USFS will be looking into permitting the shuttle companies because the USFS is mandated to permit commercial use on Forest Lands. The USFS would collect the fees and transfer a determined amount to the BLM for the BLM roads used. This would be similar as the agencies do with the Wild Section fees. Alan said he really wants to look at charging the shuttle service, not only because it is mandated but because of safety and insurance concerns. With the shuttle companies under a permit it would be possible to look at ways in which the Bear Camp toilet could get cleaned in exchange of some fees. Alan said this was just one way the USFS is looking at permitting. The group seemed to be ok about shuttle permits, stating that it would provide that the shuttle company would be safer by regulations, have insurance and have to follow all state rules. One member of the audience had a shuttle business

as well as a few of the outfitters there and they also saw permitting the shuttle companies as a good thing. Of course it was mentioned that the cost of shuttling a vehicle could go up.

Roads - Bear Camp Road, now known as Bear Camp Coastal Route, will be closed in mid November. Peavine is considered the major route with the Bear Camp Coastal Route considered a seasonal road. The BLM will continue to clear away debris at the Galice Slide area to keep the seasonal road open as long as the cost is not prohibitive. BLM can afford small fixes and clearings for the Galice Slide in the \$1,000.00 range, but will not appropriate a large sum to the slide should it degrade significantly.

Bridges - The Bunker Creek Bridge, down from Big Windy, has been deemed unsafe by BLM State Office Engineers and the BLM has closed the bridge with signs that state to use at your own risk. This is a large bridge with a span of 75 feet and will take \$100,000.00 to repair. Medford BLM Engineers will be giving the bridge a second look for an assessment. At this time there is no money in appropriated funds to fix the bridge and any funds requested would not likely be available till 2010 or beyond. Once we get the second assessment of the Bunker Creek Bridge BLM will decide what action to take.

The USFS said that they are hoping to have their bridges inspected this fall and they expect some of the bridges to be listed as not favorable.

Bears - The USFS is requesting the help of all river users in educating the public, and all river users of not feeding the bears. There were reports of bears being fed so pictures can be taken. Please remind others that "a fed bear is a dead bear".

Toilets - BLM is eliminating two toilets this coming year, Lower Horseshoe and Tye. The Maintenance Organization (MO) has run out of space at the sites to dig new holes. Space is also running out for new holes to be dug at Doe Creek and Missouri Bar. They are also looking at closure soon. At this point it was asked what the river users thought of the toilet screens the BLM installed at some of the toilet sites. Over all the feelings expressed was that they were good, liked to see them.

Open Discussion:

It was asked what is the value of the meetings for BLM now that expectations are changed, fees are not the driving overview now that the fees collected do not have to be used at the site they were collected. It was suggested that there be two meetings, one for those who want to see the budget side and those who want to work on issues, have discussions for other than \$\$\$\$\$.

Reserved Camp Site – BLM has not brought the camp site issue to the agenda. We are not proposing to start camp site reservations. Abbie said there are proposals out

there however she has not yet seen them. There is a process in place to look at proposals and this process is open to the public. The process which the BLM and USFS would follow would include, letters, scoping, public notice, public meetings, environmental assessment and Federal Register notification. The process could take anywhere from 3 months to 3 years and it would be up for protest and appeal. Substantive letters and proposals of why something is good, or bad, and what changes need to be implemented are welcome. Proposals from inner groups, such as private and commercial groups working together would be even better. Letters that simply say we want reserved campsites with no substance are not as helpful.

It was asked why BLM is not going forward with assigned/reserved camp sites. Abbie said that two years ago at the Agency/Outfitter meeting we did a “brainstorming ” of reserved campsites systems and because of so much backlash from the public side, thinking, incorrectly, that we were making a decision BLM tabled it until there were proposals in writing. It was brought up that perhaps there needs to be a limit on groups, not numbers of people that launch each day.

It was asked if we (BLM/USFS) could create new campsites and put in new toilets. The answer was no, and campsites change each year high water flows in the winter and we are running out of areas to dig pit toilets. We are closing two this year as stated earlier. Alan added that we have a difficult time finding the necessary funding to maintain what the agencies currently have and to add more would not be wise. It was mentioned that maybe putting signs up so people knew where they were would help in deciding what camp site to stay at. The agency response to signing was the difficulty with signs is they are a maintenance problem.

It was brought up by an outfitter that there has already been discussions on this issue between private boater organizations and outfitters on the Rogue. He offered the following e-mail and invited anyone who was interested to get together to help in the campsite issue to contact Zach of Echo trips. E-mail Zach@echotrips.com Zach said they want to stop the speed boating also.

Abbie stated that the agencies want to work with the groups, no decisions have been made, and nothing is being implemented at this time.

Winkle Bar – BLM has acquired the Winkle Bar property. BLM is working on a nomination of Zane Grey’s cabin and the Winkle Bar site to be listed on the National Historic Register. The cabin is compromised and will need considerable work. It was asked if an outfitter could work the site as a concessioner; that might be possible but the BLM frowns on that type of permit and it is not likely to happen. The BLM has many options open, from charging fees to stay there, such as the USFS does with their lookouts, to tearing down all the buildings, except the Cabin. Keeping the cabin was is a condition of getting the property. When looking at fees to stay at the site, BLM must go thru a process to determine the fee for rentals. BLM also may not come in direct competition with established business.

Attendees:

(please forgive any butchered names, some were hard to read – call me with the correct spelling 541-471-6648 for future reference- thank you, Louise)

Larry Laitner – River Hawks
Karen Salley – River Hawks
Ralph Trige – Middle Rogue Steelheaders
Scott Stephenson – Middle Rogue Steelheaders
Brian Whitham – river user
Lowell Pratt – Rogue River Raft Trips
Mike Adrews – river user
Chuck Closterman – river user
Scott Fine – Galice Resort
Mike Cooley – Middle Rogue Steelheaders
Mark Keslo – Middle Rogue Steelheaders
Walt Bammann – North West Rafter's Assoc.
Michael Greenbaum – river user
Brad Niva – Rogue Wilderness Adventures
Zac Kaufmann – Rogue River Raft Trips
Erik Weiseth – OTT
Barbara Talbert – river user
Kevin Talbert – river user
Zach Collier - Echo
SteveWelch – Arta
Kate Wollney – Oars
Edgar Vargas - Sundance
Mark Tipton – river user
Nick Ellis – river user
Erin Ellis – river user
Aaron Stone – Noah's
Mike Slagle - OTT