

**Outfitter and Guide Meeting
November 16, 2011
Grants Pass Interagency Office**

Agency Representatives:

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Medford District, Grants Pass Resource Area:

Katrina Symons, Field Manager; Jeanne Klein, Acting Medford Recreation Lead; Dave Ballenger, Acting Assistant Field Manager for Recreation; Barbara Zurhellen, Commercial Permit Administrator; Becky Brown, Rand Visitor's Center Manager; Shawn Clark, Maintenance Manager; Todd Calvert, Park Ranger; Gitta Anderson, Park Ranger; Tom Gentry, Park Ranger; Vickie Whiteaker, Park Ranger/Note taker; Jared Nichols, Facilitator.

United States Forest Service (USFS) Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Gold Beach

Ranger District: Alan Vandiver, Gold Beach District Ranger; Nancy Schwieger, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist, and April Skaaren, River Permit Manager, Gold Beach Ranger District; Jon Hall, Acting Forest Recreation, Engineering and Lands Staff; Rogue River – Siskiyou National Forest.

Outfitter Representatives:

Mike Slagle – OTT; Erik Weiseth – OTT; Jeanne Fields – OTT; Hugh Hague – NOAH's; Lowell Pratt – Morrison's Lodge; Vernon Grieve – Grieves Guide Service; Amy Grieve – Grieves Guide Service; Scott Malone – Rogue Wilderness; Will Volpert – Rogue River Trips; Zach Collier – ECHO; Tyler Wendt – OARS; Jeff Helfrich - Helfrich Guide Service; Dan Stumpff – Northwest Drifters; Pete Wallstrom – Momentum; Brad Niva – Rogue Wilderness; Steve Welch – ARTA Daphne Lyda; Randy Nelson – Lower Rogue Excursion; Anne Scott – Arrowhead Adventures; Jim Ritter – Rogue River Journeys; Travis Tocher ; Ernie Fields – Jo Co Marine Deputy; Jason Schmidt – Jo Co Deputy; Kate Wollney – OARS; Debbie Thomason – Galice Resort; Todd Weck – Rogue Canyon Outfitters

Handouts available at the sign-in for meeting participants included:

- 2011 Rogue River Users Meeting Agenda
- 2011 Wild Rogue River Use Report
- Bear Statistical Analysis 2011

Welcome and ground rules with opening remarks from BLM and FS. Both agencies communicated the value of establishing good relationships, two-way communications, commitment to resolve ongoing issues/concerns, appreciation for a successful season and commitment to talk specifically about what is important to the outfitters.

Introductions commenced around the room.

News and Updates – BLM

- Rogue River Business Plan is the current program priority for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012.
- Winkle Bar – Business plan is on hold for now.
- Recently conducted an asset management review to look at options to reduce facility costs by 25% across district due to potential budget cuts.
- Galice Access Road – received funding for geotechnical evaluation, design and implementation. Evaluation and design in FY 2012 and implement in FY 2013.
- Shuttle Permitting – Looking into the possibility of permitting shuttles in 2012 with implementation in 2013. Fee goal would be to return the revenue to the Rogue River.

BLM/FS presented the meeting participants with the option to skip to outfitter topics, or review the Power Point presentation regarding agenda items. Outfitters opted to skip the PowerPoint presentation and move on to their most pressing issues and concerns. Meeting participants asked that the Power Point presentation be made available on our website.

Action item - If policy allows, BLM agreed to place the Power Point presentation on website.

The issues (and suggested solutions) that were submitted to BLM on behalf of the Rogue River Wild Canyon Outfitter Chapter of the Oregon Outfitters and Guides Association after their April 26 - 27, 2011, meeting were distributed. Handout listed 7 items that the outfitters wanted to discuss/resolve.

- 1) Trip Cards – Could there be an improved system of reporting financial information?
- 2) Guides Accompanying Hikers – Are guides allowed to accompany guests on the trail?
- 3) 30 Minute Toilet Setup – Problematic regulation.
- 4) Small Start Camp-Lodge Split – Can a small start be split?
- 5) Rogue River Ranch Vehicle Parking – A crowded parking area is visually disruptive, can vehicles park elsewhere?
- 6) Penalties/Special Penalties – Can penalties be reviewed and improved?
- 7) Campsite Competition – Conflicts and resolution to campsite competition.

Decisions on Items 1 & 2 – Trip Cards & Guides Accompanying Hikers

- 1) Trip Card financial disclosure information – Five commercial outfitters will be selected to participate in a trial system of reporting financial information on a monthly/yearly post use report rather than they currently do on their trip cards. A letter will be sent to all outfitters asking them if they want to participate in the one year trial. A lottery will be conducted if more than 5 are interested.

Comment – make sure it is clear in the letter to all the commercial outfitters that not requesting participation in the one-year trial does not indicate a lack of interest changing the reporting process.

- 2) Guides accompanying hikers – 1972 Management Plan is silent on supported hike trips. Current practice of guide accompanying hikers is allowed to continue, but must be raft supported (i.e.: can't offer guided backpacking trips).

Item 3 – Toilet Setup

The focus for addressing this subject is waste management and parity between commercial and non-commercial groups.

Comments –

- Is there actual proof that the 30 minute regulation is helping?
- Outhouses are the problem.
- Replace the Bear Observation Form with a Toilet Paper Garden Observation Form.
- Written words need improvement.
- What is written and enforcement on the river need to be consistent.

Items 4 & 5 – Small Start Camp-Lodge Split & Rogue River Ranch Parking

More information gathering is necessary for items 4 & 5. Agencies will follow-up with more discussion by January.

Comments –

- Outfitters are in favor of small start split.
- Small starts are easier to sell.
- Vehicle parking at the ranch is obtrusive to the wilderness experience.
- Parking vehicles by the tabernacle would be acceptable.
- Hopefully no adverse impact on Marial Lodge owner and their parking situation.

Item 6 – Penalties

This is an agency function and can't be shared with outside interest groups or outfitters. Agencies will be looking at violations and penalties for both commercial and non-commercial operating plans to ensure parity and fairness, also making sure the penalty fits the violation. Agencies would consider input from Outfitters and user groups.

Comment-

- Agencies could be more lenient in the shoulder season, when the river is not so busy, on the No-Show penalty.

Item 7 – Campsite Competition

The Agencies are looking at this as a “carrying capacity” issue. This will be an extensive and intensive process. Desire to identify the “low hanging fruit” to begin the process.

Comment-

- With dry erase board at Rand, at least Outfitters know what campsites other Outfitters are trying for.

Additional Issues: identified by outfitters.

- 1) Dogs are becoming a problem in the canyon. Controlling dogs and picking up their waste. Can Rand educate the public?
- 2) Extend the regulated use season due to congestion, overuse of sites, lack of toilet compliance, and open fires.

- 3) Fatalities at Blossom, can anything be done?
- 4) Regulate the increased number of hikers using the trail.
- 5) Need to notify Outfitters when Bear Camp Road is going to be closed.
- 6) Increase the Outfitter meeting to 3 hours.

If outfitters schedule a meeting the Agency folks will come if invited.

Recorded Bin List Items

Bear report card	Penalties
30 Minute Toilet/Waste	Campsite Competition
Small Start splits	Dogs
Vehicles at ranch	Post-regulated use season
Fatalities	Private hikers increasing
Communication re: Bear Camp	

Participants were asked to identify their top 3 items on the Bin List for breakout discussion groups. The goal was to identify the specific problem and possible solutions.

Priority Discussion Issue

30 Minute Toilet Setup

Problems

- Human waste in the canyon
- Boaters don't want to use or clean their own toilets
- Boaters have become dependent on established outhouses instead of using their own toilet
- Hikers aren't required to pack out their waste and are not regulated
- Campsites with outhouses are sought by both large and small groups
- "30-minute rule" is too restrictive and not solving the human waste problem in the canyon. Restriction is causing unnecessary animosity
- 30-minute rule causes lunch stop competition for sites with toilets
- Not all 30-minute or more stops need a toilet set-up, like scouting Blossom
- Human waste from boaters not an issue during the day. The issue is in the evening in camp

Possible Solutions

- Educate hikers about the use of human waste containment (or removal) systems
 - Handouts at the Visitor Center and trailheads
 - Place information on the website
 - Handout human waste bags for free
 - Put a trash can at the Ranch for human waste bag disposal
 - Require hikers to check-in at Rand before their trip
- Improve boater education about the use of human waste containment (or removal) systems
 - Handouts at the Visitor Center
 - Place information on the website
- Eliminate 30-minute rule

- Use 30-minute rule and set-up only for the end of the day when visitors are in camp (not during the day at other stops, hiking, site seeing, lunch)
- Eliminate “set-up” language and use “available” (or “accessible”) with the 30-minute rule
 - Define “available” (or “accessible”)
 - Wag bags on beach or in boat
 - Toilet readily available (not buried) for group
- Consistency in message to users by all agency personnel and in enforcement
- Agency personnel should not be so stern about enforcement
- Eliminate government toilets
- Replace bear survey with a human waste survey (gather some qualitative data)
- Replace the word toilet with “human waste containment (or removal) systems” in our written messages

Priority Discussion Issue

Campsite Competition

Problems

- Determining appropriate size camp for groups and educating them about how to choose
- Small groups not sharing large sites with other groups
- Small and Large groups competing for sites with outhouses
- Too many groups for physical capacity, more small groups today than in the past.

Possible Solutions

- Reservation System
 - For all groups
 - Large camps only
 - Optional for groups
 - Ensuing discussion: Reservation system not possible without extensive study, input. Potential carrying capacity study. Probable NEPA, all alternatives studied.
- Removal of outhouses
- Limit use to number of groups rather than number of people
- Continue with commercial & non-commercial groups voluntarily placing their choices of campsites on white board
- Talk with other river managers and how they are handling campsites
- Place outhouses in small sites and not large
- Expand Lodge space
- Increase number of campsites
- List campsites available for small, medium, and large groups

Priority Discussion Issue

Regulated Use Season

Season Length

Reviewed cause, effect and solutions for changing length of permitted season
Start the permitted season on May 1 and end the season on October 31

Cause

- Non-commercial trips unregulated (too many people using river)

Affect

- Impact on campsites
- Non-use of firepans and portable toilets
- Diminished experience for all users
- Numbers well over 120/day especially when there is good weather the weekend after the regulated use season ends
- Boat ramp overcrowding
- Group size over 20 people maximum
- Deer hunting season – layovers
- Assured starting date

Solutions

- In order to change dates, we need data, pictures, etc. to show there is a problem
- Monitor numbers of private rafters prior to the start and after the end of the regulated use season for a couple years to gather hard data (boat ramps, floats, FS lower section)
- Educate public in a variety of ways
 - Open Rand on May 1 and leave open until October 31
 - Rafters still check in for volunteer permit
 - Put information in Lottery letter and on website
- Agency presence at boat ramps and on the river
- More education on how to get a private float permit during the regulated use season, simplify steps (Rogue Wilderness has this on their website)
- Add another public phone line at Rand
 - Permit line
 - General Information Line
- Put a ‘Frequently Asked Question’ page on the BLM/FS website

NEXT STEPS:

Meet the following time frame with communication via email and/or video conferences: address the low hanging fruit by May 1, 2012. Apply 2 week notification to commercial outfitters prior to final decisions.

Item #3 (Toilet Setup) – address the low hanging fruit by May 1, 2012 giving a 2 week notice for comment to Outfitters via email.

Items # 4 & 5 (Small Start Split & Vehicle Parking at Ranch) – Agency will follow-up and have more discussion by January.

Item #6 (Penalties) – Agreed to discuss the subject in the future.

Item #7 (Campsite Competition) – Create a small workgroup to identify low hanging fruit. Communicate forward movement to commercial outfitters.

Wrap up – Participants approved and appreciated the meeting format.

12/12/11

Comments -

- Most productive meeting we have ever had.
- Come up with solutions that correlate with Business Plan.
- Let's not rehash the same problems next year.