

John Day Snake Resource Advisory Council Meeting

February 20-21, 2020

Baker, OR BLM Office

Meeting convened at 2:00 after the field trip

Members present: Steve Lent, Jerry Brummer, Greg Jackle, Jim Reiss, Glenn Burleigh, Terry Drever Gee, Art Waugh, Randy Jones, Brian Sykes, Jim Boethin, Bob Krein

Agency Reps and other: Paula Guenther, Dennis Teitzel, Katie Nelson (Gov Youth board), Larisa Bogardus, Don Gonzalez, Ed Guzman, Deputy Ranger - ? , Shane Jeffries, Joe Neal,

Chair – Randy Jones confirmed for a third term

Vice – Chair, Art Waugh, confirmed for first term

Presentation: Idaho Power and Hells Canyon license renewal; Fred Noland from Idaho Power.

fnoland@idahopower.com

FERC 1971 – Hells Canyon Complex Update

The Brownlee, Oxbow, and Hells Canyon hydro plants were built in succession under one license. This will be one of the largest relicensing efforts in the country – and it will be very expensive – we’re looking for a 50-year license and we think it will cost somewhere around the billion dollar mark.

Overall, it’s a very complicated issue – it’s not simple.

Next step is to do the ESA, Section 7 Consultation, then some NEPA that will be a renewal by FERC. We’re unsure at this point what this will look like. From a public standpoint, FERC will issue a statement about how to comment. There was an FEIS in the past, and it’s unlikely that things have changed.

We’re dealing with areas with different politics and that makes for different priorities. Oregon is a blue state and Idaho is a red state. This adds to the complexity. There are certifications that are under state authority like the 401 certification, and we need to get that from both states. But the states emphasize different things, so we ended up with a settlement – and this took 3 years. FERC has now started license process.

Some of the issues we have to work with – in Idaho – agriculture cannot be affected by reintroducing species; and in Oregon, we have to allow fish passage. We have to work with local, state and federal politicians and rules to get a little bit of both states’ needs, with renegotiation down the road.

In this settlement, that covers 20 years, there’s a clause that Idaho Power will review it to see how things are working. We’ll look at the science on temperatures, conditions, fisheries, etc. We’ll see if Idaho will move fish up the Hells Canyon Dam (still in Oregon currently and not in Idaho). We’re looking at \$800,000 more for fish, tribes and recreation.

Right now, Idaho Power will submit updates in March, with the Biological Assessment and ESA consultation. This will address the stuff in the FEIS (boat ramps, land agency information, etc.) and FERC will take the info and work on the relicense.

FERC will have a public comment period. There isn't a lot of case law, so we're still trying to see what all the mechanisms are for going forward.

Then, maybe we'll be at the point of a new license.

There are a few on-site issues that we're looking at:

Moonshine Mine Boat Access – Idaho Power (IDP) built in 2017 and people wondered why? Actually, this was a condition from the BLM that was also in the settlement agreement for Baker County. The goal - provide a deep-drop boat launch in this area. This is now the deepest launch on Brownlee Res.

Brownlee Measures – we met with the Dept. of Interior on the first location – Oasis in OR (near Weiser). This is an IDP site. FERC says the influence from Brownlee goes to here –that's a long way. There's a little BLM site with a launch and a toilet. We'll replace toilet and improve the parking. We're charged with this kind of stuff when we do things like this.

Steck Park (ID) – the plan is to rebuild whole site including the ramp and camping. And once done, we'll take over the operations and maintenance.

K-Fan – this is a dispersed site and we'll add a vault toilet.

Brownlee to Oxbow – there are only 2 BLM sites to upgrade and take over. There are about 13 river miles in this stretch.

Hells Canyon Reservoir to Oxbow – there are 4 BLM sites, and then we'll go to the Forest Service on the Idaho side. We'll be doing upgrades to Westfall, Bobcat, Airstrip, Cooper Creek, etc. We'll add camping, protect cultural resources, add or improve ramps, and do some general upgrades.

IDP has to make a lot of plans – and plans within plans – and there's not a lot of time to do it, and we have to do it together. Everyone needs to sit down and write comprehensive plans for all kinds of recreation, access, etc. and we'll do it in a year. We do need to be realistic – the plans will contain all the sites that are to be upgraded and turned over, and also the fisheries, historic properties, etc. It's important for this cost and timeline that we work together to direct people, mitigate issues, protect resources.

Question about Daly Creek – is this open to hunting? *No – youth hunt only. Why? The reason is that we bought it for habitat mitigation, and it needed a lot of work. We had to do work on the road, pull out infrastructure, change to native landscape/restore the site. While we did this, we didn't have any public in there – we didn't want weeds brought in and the work we'd done for restoration destroyed. Now we're reviewing whether or not we can allow people in. Our mission here IS NOT public access – it's restoration. We do now have a mentored youth hunt. We might get to a point where we could add a little more.*

And Oxbow runway – can't that be public? It's a beautiful runway, so could IDP take a risk and make this public? *I don't know that answer. The backcountry pilots will be part of another meeting – I'll bring that up.*

Snake River Stewardship Program (SRSP) – this is the first island in the Marsing, Parma area. Work here is driven by water quality standards. We violate the standard about 2 weeks every year. The reservoir holds heat, and we end up letting warmer water down and it violates standard for fish. We work to

mitigate, but we can't always do it directly. In this case, we do an offsite mitigation. Goal is to channelize the bed to make it swifter and deeper and therefore cooler; so far, the willows are taking off. We're working on another island this year and, in total, we'll have about 25 islands. This isn't a small effort – we're testing and seeing what happens now, working on irrigation returns, discharge to the Snake – seeing if it's helpful. Other things like helping to pay farmers to switch to pivots to reduce runoff, etc.

Hewitt Holcomb Parks – County parks, settlement with counties – we'll contract out management/maintenance of them. IDP declined to do this, but we have invested heavily in parks through settlement. They've been given 500,000 to make improvements along with in-kind services. We're also helping with grant proposals, and we pay for seasonals to help with maintenance.

Pine Creek Tributary – this flows into Oxbow by Halfway. IDP wants to do reintroduction here, so we're working with landowners on diversions and restoration. When we put them in there, the fish should run up into the forest. We need to figure out how to move them down as well. Looking at bull trout, salmon, then steelhead. One at a time to gauge success.

How many dams does IDP own on Columbia? None – these three dams in the project are the furthest down. We have 17 total but all higher up. What do you say to people who want the dams removed? Provide the economics? Yes. What about enviro damage from removing the dams? Yes, it's complicated. FERC is the lead with this. They write the NEPA, etc. because it's a major fed action to give us a license. FERC doesn't see it as a viable option at this point.

Is there a lot of economic benefit from these dams? *Yes – a lot.*

Is there a lack of sedimentation below the dams? Yes, we are seeing things like beach loss. If you go to the last volume of the FEIS, you can see the settlement and the actions we're supposed to do. We were asked to truck sand, and we said we'd rather pay the USFS a million a year for a while and have that agency do it. We'll help monitor to see what happens with the beaches.

Public Comment period

How big is Daly Creek? *It's about 13,000 acres.* On water quality – do you have the temp where you want it outside the 2 weeks? *ID/OR have different standards but we're within the window.* When you release salmon will they be spawning? *Yes, that's the idea. We've been fighting water quality for so long, and we have worked with a lot of entities – it really came down to the reservoir water is too warm.* What's the feeling on when you'll get a license? *We hope for 2022.*

Kathleen – *from the Senator's standpoint, there are a couple things that we've been working on. One of them is the 2018 farm bill for soil health amendment. This pilot projects to use soil amendments in farming and studies the benefits in terms of carbon sequestration.* Isn't the Forest Service is looking at biochar to see if it can be effective and worth the cost? *Yes, that would be an example of this. NRCS is using some of that in a program and we're pushing this forward – if folks are wanting this in terms of range and farming, they should contact me and see how we might be able to support it. There are also the wilderness bills in eastern Oregon – these aren't always that popular, but we've been working with the local communities this past year to come up with something that's beneficial. We've come up with the Malheur CEO Bill – this would move about 1 million acres into wilderness, AND move 1.4 million acres out of Wilderness Study Area designation to BLM. We'd complete a programmatic EIS to improve practices, remove juniper, treat weeds, monitor, etc. We call it the CEO group – Community*

Empowerment of the Owyhees. Folks will get support to improve their practices, and it does NOT limit grazing; it continues grazing as a grandfathered use into the new wilderness as well as into the land being currently managed as wilderness. The land removed from wilderness would have options. One of my concerns is what will it do to minerals, strategic minerals, etc. Patented mining claims are protected, and folks who were at the table brought this concern forward. We plan to protect those interest. Many of the acres being proposed for designating as wilderness are already off limits because the mineral rights have already been removed (e.g. due to sage grouse). We were very deliberate to not remove any more rights. And, there will be more opportunity for natural resource use and mineral use because of the acres being removed from WSA designation. The Senator took on this bill because the Owyhee Basin Stewardship Group came to him and asked for this. We set the rules for them though – we wouldn't violate any environmental laws and the members of the group had to be open to talking to everyone.

What about fighting fire in wilderness – will you be able to use equipment? *It requires one level of permission (Field manager at the BLM to the regional forester for the Forest Service) to just make sure we're using the appropriate tools. We also have help from Rural Fire Protection Associations - they can call and say what's up with respect to a fire and we can authorize equipment use from there.*

Fuel breaks are also a part of this – we have separate and discrete parts. For example, we have short lengths of road (cherry stem roads) – so we'd add buffers. We also looked at the level of access and folks were in agreement. There's a lot of pressure here with visitors from all over – our goal is to keep people safe and have a more organized view. The ranchers wanted more certainty. We want to negotiate a solution that we have a role in.

With the soil health amendment/Farm Bill – some of the innovations we've been talking about have been like the torrefaction process in John Day, various incinerators and other technologies. Biochar is another tool being used in riparian areas and restoration and has a number of different applications. We NEED to have a real solution for applying this across acreage. The RAC should still listen for those kinds of opportunities.

What's being done through IDP on green algae? IDP - *It's one of those things where we're working with district health offices and DEQ to help identify the cause, and to look at when/why blooms go toxic. Right now we help with monitoring and collecting samples but we're not aware of viable solutions.*

Cascade Crest Wilderness Fee –

We got a lot of data about use on the forests, and we were impressed by the increase in use numbers. We know that we've gone from hundreds of thousands to 1.2 million visitors. The planning subcommittee heard the proposal for permit and access fee, we participated in public meetings, and I wanted to offer a huge commendation to Art who visited both forests RAC meetings and public meetings. He gave a lot of perspective and brought other perspective back to our RAC.

Shanda Dekome (Deschutes National Forest) – from October to now, Lisa Machnik and I have spoken with the RAC a couple times, and we had submitted our Federal Register Notice (FRN) to be published. We'd hoped it had been published in time to implement the fee system at the same time as the limited entry permit system (NEPA). The timeline was tight, and we had to work through things more than we thought. We were extremely happy with the RAC subcommittee participation – you really helped a lot.

When we found out that FRN hadn't happened, we made decision to stop going forward with the fee, and to put energy into just implementing the limited entry permit system. We put the subcommittee on hold – but I wanted to say that we really appreciate the work that has been done. We got your draft report and would like to get what you have in the future. In the meantime, we'll move to adaptive management. This season we'll collect data and information about how things are going with limited entry. We may get back to this in the future and we'll re-engage with the RAC in the future as needed.

Randy –This wasn't too much of a surprise, but as a subcommittee, we were relieved. It was hard work with a tight timeline. At the same time, we were substantially thorough about our deliberations. So, although we're on hold, I wanted to share some of our key outcomes. We have a letter we'll convey as a report NOT a recommendation. In the future, we'll have this in the record.

There were about 12,000 comments on the proposal and that's pretty impressive. As a result of the process, the subcommittee found 9 key findings. The vast majority of people are strongly opposed to fee program. It is perceived to be inconsistent with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) (perception at least, think of this as a point where education is needed in the future). The administrative fee through Rec.gov was hard to swallow and we wondered how it would hit pocketbooks and perception of value. Related to this, is the fact that you couldn't fully cancel the reservation once it was made – for these reasons and others, we were coming to the conclusion that the fee program was unwarranted at this time. We would like to see – and this hold gives us a chance to take a look – the effects of entering into limited entry alone. And to look at other controls such as parking permits and site management processes in the interim. We think it would be better to grab more information and come at this more clearly in the future. We'll pick it up at a later date as needed and look forward to more information.

To add to what Randy said, I don't know if this body would want to forward recommendations to the Deschutes and Willamette National Forests if this comes back (and I expect it will) unless a lot of the information holes are filled. This proposal came forward very quickly and the dollar figures were about the only part really nailed down. As an alternative, when the Deschutes came to us with the fee for the cabin proposal, it was clearly defined, had lots of information and was nailed down. We'd like to see that kind of precision in the future if this comes again. Right now, it comes with a lot of "ifs" and we're barking up a tree when we don't know what's in it!

Did the other RAC come up with anything? I haven't seen anything. Art attended their meeting – they also took a bit of public comment – all opposed – but they hadn't gotten very far by the time the proposal was pulled. I got the impression though, that they hadn't heard much about it – that RAC is mostly Title II and this was something new for them.

For the John Day – Snake RAC, we didn't get enough info about this issue. I'd like to share an article that the Forest Service won't add fees for trailheads. The Deschutes and Willamette announced no fees and that the officials decided to prioritize limited entry. This doesn't seem like a truthful answer – why didn't you just say that the FS didn't get the FRN published in time? Why not tell everyone? I hope we can come up with a system that works – with use increasing by thousands at individual trailheads, we need to find something that helps.

Question for the Planning committee – this was the first time you all met and worked through an issue. Did it work well? *Yes, the system went well, with respect to our field trips, phone calls, etc.*

I would say that the subcommittee needs a regularly scheduled time to meet, and each project should come with a timeline including an end date. We need to have advance notice for planning, especially for big items like the wilderness fee. *We're working through the FRN process to have monthly calls – but we can only announce 2 subcommittee meetings at a time. Right now, we have May and September on the books. We can add more but it takes a really long time to publish.*

I think the challenge for us was that, early on, we didn't know if the RAC was going to be involved. Once the Deschutes realized they needed the RAC, it was pretty late in the process. This kind of BIG stuff needs to come to us much earlier for us to be effective. We know the fees punish the honest people, and that a lot of people will cheat, but it's a start. If you end up needing the RAC in the future, get us on your calendar early.

Two points on the subcommittee. A fee assessment is one thing. We were also REALLY concerned with the resource and the numbers of users. We know the damage and pressure is real and may have lasting impacts. It was an undercurrent to our discussion. We also really felt limited entry was very appropriate. Going forward, we'd like to know more about how that system works. Can we learn more about this? Can we get a briefing on limited entry as a system? *Maybe how about the trails that are already limited (Obsidian, Pamela, - what worked, didn't, what enforcement is going on, education, etc.). Would that work?*

We've talked about the wilderness fee proposal, and now we can move to the John Day River fee extension.

Kirstin Heins, Assistant Field Manager, Central Oregon Field Office, BLM

Many years ago, in 2010 we made use limits on the John Day River. For the first couple of years, the limits were implemented, and then because of standards for public information, the program had to be moved to be hosted by the BLM. The next time we opened permits, too many people accessed the program at the same time, and it crashed the server. Without a tool to implement, we had to go back to unlimited entry. In the meantime, use has increased. The impacts to users have increased, as well as the impacts to resources. So now – we've moved the river over to Recreation.gov. Long story short – our initial plan said we'd like a fee from May 15- July 10 and that has worked up until now. With increased use and more information about changes in seasons and flows, we like to make a change. The John Day River plan says that we can adapt to changing seasons of use. We would like to expand the season to May 1 – July 15 to match our current heavy use. This season will be the new baseline.

Is Rec.gov prepared? *We are testing the system right now. We intend to go live on March 4 (and retain the existing system just in case).*

Are you getting the word out? *We are hosting an outfitters meeting on Monday. We also sent out 5,500 emails to announce the move to Rec.gov – everyone who's gotten a permit in the last 12 years. We shared the numbers of launches by segment/launch site, and general recommendations to folks about what they can do, better launch dates in a handout that we sent out as part of our outreach.*

Administratively and fiscally, this is a great deal. Matching the limited entry with a fee for an extra 25 days makes sense.

I was on the initial committee. We worked hard to keep fees down. It is the best deal in town.

One of the complaints we got at the BLM in the last few years, was that the amount of use was high. People didn't get solitude or primitive experience they were used to or expecting. We need to push people to use low use days and spread use out. We've exceeded the daily number allowance but not the overall total for annual use – so this tells us we need to spread people out, rather than restrict numbers even more. You all might remember Thirtymile from our field trip – 27 cars last summer.

The subcommittee was in support.

Motion: In 2013 RAC recommended use fee for the float season. Due to changes in use, limited entry season was expanded. BLM would like the RAC to support expanding the fee season to May 1 – July 15 to match our current heavy use.

Terry moved; forwarded by subcommittee. Favor: motion passes, all in favor.

The John Day is good because it focuses on groups and not number of people. It's a good way to limit the number of launches – and the fees are reasonable.

Is there a problem or concern with hoarding permits? Is it an issue? *We have it managed somewhat by policy – you can have one overnight permit at a time in your name and you can have 3 day-use permits at a time. We know people will try to get around this – putting permits in different people's names, but it's a way to get at this. In general, there is a lot of talk with the CORE team and OSP for support to get this system in place. We are committed to making this successful.*

What about guides? Will they have trouble getting permits? *Guides will be able ask for additional permits if they already had trips booked this year and possibly next. We wanted to provide a bit of a net for guides with something already booked. Permits have to be in a customer's name and that person has to have Rec.gov account. This isn't always popular, but it helps with equal access for everyone. There has to be a client to have a permit.*

Do people have trouble getting permits? *We don't see much in the way of people not getting permits on the John Day. People have asked us to switch to a lottery system, but that is time intensive and is not always favorable to people who can't drop everything if they get the lottery. Every system has disadvantages and advantages. We release in two batches to also help people have an opportunity to get permits.*

Unintended consequences – on the Snake we have lottery and allocation. And now we unintentionally have an open system because the peak use period is actually outside the lottery and allocation. And we also now have a peak season in the fall when we're outside of our period of control.

We will have a fee proposal in the future: we'll bring it forward in the June meeting. We will be asking the RAC to consider a fee for the steelhead season on the river. The limits are already in place and we'll ask the RAC to consider applying the existing fee to this time period as well. We're hearing from fishing guides about the fishing pressure to a wild run. The RAC will also consider pressure from non-fishing visitors such as sheep hunters and boaters.

For tomorrow – look at your email – for sage grouse information out of DC.

Agency Administrator round table:

Dennis – Prineville BLM

See handout. As a note, our District has moved from housing all employees under one district heading, to hosting two field offices. Most staff will now work for either the Deschutes Field Office or the Central Oregon Field Office. Administrative staff and a few other positions will remain district staff.

Here's an idea about the Section Foreman's House – it's staying closed up all the time now; so how about partnering with ODFW so the guy counting fish doesn't have to just hang out in his car? He's sitting pretty close to there. *We'll have to consider that.*

For the new Mauer acquisition – will it have road access? *Yes – and the Mauer property will block up a lot of land not just along the river, but also in the uplands.*

NPS – are they getting anything from the Mauer property acquisition? How many acres? *Yes, we will be working with the John Day Fossil Beds. They are only allowed to expand the monument by 500 acres without Congressional approval to change their boundary. So they'll be looking to get some smaller pieces to straighten the edge of their boundary out.*

How does the money for acquisitions work? These funds come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund – it's a program that gets money from offshore oil receipts. Congress puts money from these programs into the LWCF program to acquire public land – the intent is to block up land, improve public access, etc.

There's a lot of cultural and prehistoric value with the Mauer property as well – it'd be good to get it into public hands.

When you make these acquisitions, the BLM has new opportunities for dispersed camping river access, etc. In the John Day River plan, do you have the ability to create more sites and close some of the more heavily used sites? That might naturally happen – users will have more options with more land. High use days can spread out a bit more. With limited entry, some of the heavily used sites might get more time to recover. However, we won't have opportunity to add more launches or takeouts without amending the plan. Also, as a positive note, with the two field offices, we hope to focus more energy on the John Day.

Overall, I'd like compliment the Prineville staff regarding the rivers. They've been really responsive, and I appreciate Jeff Kitchens turning around relationships.

Meeting adjourned: 4:50 pm.

Day 2 – convened at 8:01

Present: Randy Jones, Bill Harvey (Baker County Commissioner), Art Waugh, Glenn Burleigh, Jim Reiss, Terry Drever Gee, Greg Jackle, Jerry Brummer, Steve Lent, Bob Krein, Jim Boethin, Brian Sykes,

Agency Representatives: Joe Neer (Umatilla NF), Dennis (Prineville BLM), Don (Vale BLM), Ed (Malheur NF), Tom Monotya (Wallowa Whitman NF), Shane (Ochoco NF), Shanda (Deschutes NF), Larisa (Vale BLM – Facilitator), Lisa Clark (Prineville BLM – notes).

Guests: Jean Waugh, Suzie Koppert, Brian Wolf NHOTIC director, Katie Nelson (Gov advisory, Oregon Youth Corps).

Dallas Defrees, Baker County Local Implementation Team, Promoting sage grouse recovery through partnership; Local Implementation Team (LIT)

The LIT is a group of agency and private landowners who got together to tackle sage-grouse decline. The group includes members from ODFW, County reps, weeds, NRCS, BLM, private landowners, etc.

The Greater Sage-grouse is a landscape species. They depend on quality sagebrush AND a lot of connected habitat over their life cycle. Patchy land doesn't always work for them. There are three main threats to this habitat here - wildfire, invasive annual grasses (cheatgrass, medusahead rye, and ventenata), and juniper encroachment. Sagebrush areas are slow to recover from these threats.

The LIT was formed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife here in 2012 to identify local threats and apply conservation ideas in a coordinated manner. The goal is to focus on solutions regionally. Things really got going here in 2015 and LITs are now a key mechanism to conserve and preserve this species.

We're working on the Baker Priority Area of Conservation Comprehensive Threat Reduction Grant, and we have an OWEB grant to help implement ideas. Generally projects focus on the Baker County area, and on the PAC within the county boundary (primary lek area).

Regarding Greater Sage-grouse population data – the State, BLM and Baker PAC have all been showing declining populations since 1980. Here, we have a higher percent of decline – we've seen a 75% decline in Baker. We're kind of isolated so we don't get a lot of birds coming in from other areas. Majority of this PAC is about 70/30 private/public land.

In 2015 the population dropped and triggered a specific look at threats called a causal factor analysis (CFA). Through this process we looked at vegetation, fire effects, existing forb and plant cover, recreation, grazing, West Nile Virus, fencing, etc.

The Baker LIT elaborated on the CFA, and looked at the landscape level effects across public and private land, and prioritized actions and coordinated with all stakeholders.

Actions:

We look at steps we could take for immediate threat reduction: flagging fences, removing conifers, adding escape ramps in troughs. These are easy, low cost steps that have immediate improvement.

There are also steps that provide short term results but not long-term results. Or, they're steps that need to be repeated often. This is stuff like predator reduction (ravens).

For long-term solutions we're looking at invasive grasses. Fixing this issue will be very expensive and will take a long time.

Realistically, all three of these need to happen. We have an OWEB grant for 6.1 million over a 6-year period. Looking from 2019-2025 to increase quality and quantity of sage-grouse habitat. We're hoping the grant will help with vegetation management projects, information and education.

Right now, this is all on private land, along with herbicide treatments (for both noxious and invasive species) and seeding and replanting. This would be followed up by long-term management with private landowners. Next steps will include adding fences for grazing management, conducting landowner workshops, creating weed booklets and other educational materials. We've also added ATVs with broadcast seeders to help private landowners reseed their property – they will be able to rent these. Adaptive management includes rotational grazing, rest-rotation grazing, and adding Conservation Agreements (and Agreements with Assurances). On the BLM land, adding a wash station at the Virtue Flat OHV area, is another way to address weed issues.

For wildfire management, we want to develop a stakeholder group with rural fire protection associations, BLM, private landowners and the counties. We need to identify what we can do to improve wildfire response, reduce threats, etc.

Another area of interest is grass banks – these are pieces of land allotted for ranchers to use to temporarily house cattle. These pieces would be available in the event that a wildfire burns through, ranchers have a temporary spot to graze while the land recovers. We want to develop these.

We're developing post-fire restoration plans – with the goal of having 50% of lands restored.

West Nile Virus is lethal to Sage-grouse. We don't know if it's affecting our populations. We're starting to do research to learn more.

Mesic habitat mapping – right now, we know grouse need water, but we don't know what kind. Do they need springs, seeps, ditches, etc. or can they use it all? We want to get all of our water sources mapped and figure out how they're being used and prioritize work or protection of these sites.

Juniper encroachment – in this county it's not terrible, but even 4 percent will cause grouse to avoid using an area. So we're looking at removing juniper within 4 miles of leks.

Will you target areas with certain activities so you can figure out what works well and where? Not everything everywhere? Yes – and monitoring is a large part of this. We're developing a protocol and are hoping to put in research plots. *Can you shoot a raven?* No. Ravens are a problem, but we're still waiting on a process for dealing with them as predators from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We're starting to see research on ravens, and we might get the approval to use lethal methods to remove them with a corvidicide – maybe by 2021. *Seems like if you start to straight out shoot them, they might get scared off – they're pretty smart.*

With population declines, are you learning anything about the differences between public and private land and land management activities? Good question – it really depends on how the grounds are being

used: what's being grazed, how the land is being used, the differences in intensity of uses, the relation to the OHV park. So, we're working together to coordinate treatments across land ownerships: for example, we spray, and the BLM sprays on adjacent land. Then we look at the response on a landscape level.

Historically we were disking up sagebrush and planting crested wheat and it seems like we had a lot more Sage-grouse then. So, is anyone looking at planting more crested wheat? We know that crested wheat can fill a gap after a disturbance, but it serves more as a cover rather than a food source for grouse when it's grown past the early tender shoots. Whatever you do, make sure you incorporate history into coming up with our solutions. Like looking at coyotes – we can shoot them as predators.

In the graph, there are large spikes and dips in the population – how do these relate to each other? Are they indicative of larger landscape issues? From ODFW standpoint, those spikes can be related to drought, bad winter, etc. So, if we have a bad winter and lose birds but Wyoming doesn't – do their populations decline too? Are we looking across the landscape at that level? We can't just test one thing here and a different thing there. You can't just cut here, plant there – it's not just one thing to fix. The Prineville LIT looks at the same things and maybe some different things.

What are you doing for juniper? The plan for juniper removal is on a backburner as it's not a big priority here. Other areas have more juniper. We're working with the NRCS to collaborate on this. On the Prineville District, they do about 40,000 acres of juniper removal in sage-grouse habitat every year and on the Burns district it's similar. For us, juniper removal is one of the causal factors that we can get funding to address. And we get two benefits from it – it restores habitat AND reduces predator perches.

Ravens – USFWS is creating a plan that will be successful and palatable for everyone.

For the Prineville District, we have about 450,000 acres on which to reduce juniper, and as I said, we get 40K done a year. At about \$3,000-\$5,000 an acre, you can see the enormity of the project and the cost. And we're a pretty small district.

Are magpies a predator? Not really. But poison will also get these so that can be a concern as a non-targeted species.

For the BLM, about 7 years ago, many of our allotments didn't meet standards due to weeds, juniper encroachment, etc. But we still allowed grazing because the livestock didn't affect the grouse directly AND they ate medusahead.

What does it look like now? Are you taking away grazing because allotments aren't meeting standards? On the Vale District, we go out and see if an allotment meets rangeland standards. If there a lot of weeds, then it might not be meeting standard for a reason other than grazing – it's a different problem, and we try to deal with the problem. So, if we have a pasture with a lot of medusahead and cheatgrass – we will want to graze when it's young and palatable (early spring). We will look to see if we can help *with* livestock. With this strategy, we are seeing some improvements and have uplands that look good. We still need to address some of our riparian areas. We look at season of use, #AUMs, rest rotation, riparian protections, etc. And, we don't want to remove livestock altogether because they also reduce wildfire risk. Grazing plus spraying can help. We look years out for the process – and we're adding more positions to address weeds, coordinating with landowners, etc.

Minutes approval

Move to approve, seconded – in favor – approved.

Agency Updates Cont.

Shanda DeKome/Deschutes National Forest: See handout.

I wanted to say that I heard you yesterday – you want appropriate time to be involved and to learn about the mechanics of how limited entry will work. I'll be happy to bring info to the June meeting. *Regarding some of the press that happened, is the FS interested in following up with an article or information or limited entry?* I'm sure we'll talk a lot about limited entry. And about Rec.gov – federal agencies have to go to this, and we can't control the fee. For the Deschutes though, we're able to do the \$1/day individual, and \$6/group fee.

We have a sale of the Sisters property – after broker fee, the money will go toward building a new office. We won't have quite enough so we'll look to get more funding.

What are the thoughts on doing a fire break beyond the powerline corridor? Right now – the Categorical Exclusion will only cover the corridor, but larger breaks are part of a bigger discussion. Everyone is talking about fuel breaks after California, Paradise...trying to figure out what can we do to help utility companies be part of the conversation. We want to be more thorough, efficient, etc. Right now, to go beyond the current right-of-way (ROW) is another level of work. Right now, we're working on building partnerships as the first lift. Second, we have to have utility companies at our wildfire simulations, and at our tables for our pre-season work. Joe Stutler, with the Cohesive Strategy, is energized around this, and the Western Cohesive Strategy Group is looking at this. The BLM is also helping the utility companies understand what they CAN do and what they're responsible for, we are working to be consistent when dealing with them.

What about the Cabin Lake Ranger Station? This is a classic example of the historic Forest Service building. The fuel station, rangers house, etc. What's the fate of this? It's part of the same decommissioning work as Rager Ranger Station. I think that what's left right now is what will be left. We got the old gas pumps and gave them to the High Desert Museum. We still need to figure out what to do to protect historic structures. *Can you look at rental options and have volunteers to help manage?* I'd really would like to see these example structures preserved. It would be great if you would reach out to Holly Jewkes and the Deschutes with ideas; reach out to StoryCorps for options too. Money is always an issue. *We're losing a lot of historic sites due to money, and once they're torn down they're gone. I would like to see more efforts to preserve and protect. It's the same in a lot of the forests, where there are old time classic buildings and the FS doesn't get any funding to preserve them.* You're right, there are a lot lots in Hells Canyon for example.

Vale – see handout.

Umatilla – see handout.

Seems like that you are trying to get stuff in timber covered under CEs. I think this is a good step to get material to the mill in a timely manner.

Is there a timeline and a plan to revitalize the forest plan? The Wallowa Whitman is hoping to do that in the next 2 years.

Is the Wallowa Whitman working with Veterans in Baker Co too? No – we don't have a Vet crew specifically, but we work with the Vets in a lot of other ways.

The Dale Ranger Station – as part of the decommissioning, we're moving on to removing water and sewer systems. We'll leave roads, will look at dispersed rec opportunities, but we don't have any concrete plans yet.

From the 2020 flood response in this area – sections of road are still out, and we're still trying to figure out the extent of damage. Flying areas and hiking to assess. Looking for funds to open up routes, especially those that lead to facilities. We'll see more too as the snow comes off.

Shane, Ochoco – see handout.

Want to remind you to get the larch and other trees off the forest while they're still good. Lots of trees laying on the ground going bad. Maybe need to think of different things besides "salvage" since that has such a bad connotation and gets litigated a lot. Tragic to see that kind of material going to waste like that.

Walton Lake – I think it's been great that there's been a lot of public involvement. There are some opposed to what's planned but a lot are in favor. We were using a biological solution for what turned out to be a social problem – we realized that we were off track. We went back out and looked at it from the social angle and worked better with folks. The disease is everywhere but we have to address it in a campground. We can't have trees falling on campers. It's hard sometimes for people to grasp this thought, especially since the trees look healthy above-ground until they fall.

Tom Montoya – WW – see handout.

Ed Guzman, Malheur – see handout.

We're looking at shared stewardship across forests - see handout. How you work across boundaries to share money and resources to get something done that individually you couldn't do? Groups contribute money and staff; a product can be removed for another partner to "get" and it's a way to bring a lot of groups under the broad umbrella of shared stewardship and the authorities we have to use.

We currently have four projects that fit in this: 1) good neighbor authority – 4 Corners Commercial Thin. North Fork John Day Ranger District with Oregon Department of Forestry. We'll thin 70 acres, ODF will implement, and we'll get timber out. 2) Morrow County public works road – it's hard to maintain, so the county will take over maintenance and we get to haul on it. 3) Tiger Mill pProject – In this case the City of Walla Walla, NRCS, FS, etc. work together to come up with project and prescriptions that includes wildlife and fire protection, → many partners have a stake. We'll work to get some timber volume and prescribed burns.

The stewardship authority on the Forest covers a lot and it allows a forest to hold revenue and it doesn't go to Treasury. These funds can be invested into the next project. Good neighbor authority does this too – revenue can be held, and the neighbors can invest in the next project.

There are also opportunities on the Ochoco – we're in the mix for a Joint Chiefs Project to do a major project – we might get 8.5 million if we are selected. The work will be on public and private lands – we'll work across boundaries to achieve a broader landscape. It's our 3rd time to apply – we've been close before. We don't have quite as much WUI in our project so that's why we lose out, but hopefully this time we'll be successful since we improve a lot of wildlife habitat and more with this. We'd also like to reintroduce fire – a lot of landowners want to burn. With all the authorities, we'll get a lot of good work done.

The Wallowa Whitman was successful with a Joint Chief Project in 2014 – called East Face. We were able to be funding about 8 million to work on public, state and private land. The work finished up in 2018 mostly, although we have a bit to go. We worked across boundaries to help each other. The State really pitched in with private land – helping with surveys, etc. Recently, the FS Chief said there's a lot more good work to be done. The Chief has signed a letter to the Governor of Oregon to see if the State will continue to work in partnership to fund the project. It's in the State Legislature now. We get a lot of capacity added with these projects. The Wallowa Whitman completed a NEPA document, ODF paid to get work done on 70 acres. ODF will mark the trees, sell the material and collect the receipts. The Good Neighbor Authority says you have to have an agreement – our current agreement is with the State. We will work on developing more agreements, stewardship agreements, etc. where the receipts can go to the partners. We're learning as we go and we're excited about this.

When you do small cuts – the 70 acres – does that even cover the NEPA? It probably won't, we need to harvest several thousand acres to do this. That will be the next step.

What is the future economic framework in eastern Oregon? It's a big question and this line of thinking says a lot that the federal agencies are getting ahead of the curve in some respects. Specifically, looking at the opportunities that are volume based – like torrefaction, other wood products – all of this together means forest health, water health and management, wildlife management, and jobs.

Ideas going forward

Deschutes Provincial Advisory Council. We have authorization to stand up a regional Recreation RAC for FS fee/recreation projects. The charter has been approved, but we haven't heard anything about members. *If the forests go to this, please continue to include the John Day RAC in at least what's going on.* We will.

Other RAC business?

Round Robin –

Jim Boethin – this carbon tax that the west side is proposing, will that affect torrefaction plants? What would that do to Malheur lumber?

And what about a carbon trading system? Any idea if solar is going to be an option. I've heard that solar is going to produce kw/hr at .04 – that's amazing. *There's a 100+ document about the carbon bill. It leaves you a bit more confused at the end.*

In Crook County, we have applications for 2,000 more acres for solar. They're going in all over at a few thousand acres each. We're getting a lot of 100-200 acre spots in Crook County. Still a lot of unknowns with solar.

Randy Jones – there’s an allocation out of the last Oregon legislative session to raise Wallowa Lake Dam. There is some tribal angst, but it’s getting resolved and the effort is gaining traction. That’s an effort to fix the dam and raise the pool level by 4 feet. This could impact fisheries, the state park and the lower Wallowa delta. This is an irrigation-driven project to help the lower counties to use water for irrigation, but it could also enhance flows for fisheries, recreation, etc. It’s worth watching.

Brian Sykes– all access waterway fund in the legislature. This is a new fee for non-motorized watercraft, and it replaces the invasive species permit for craft over 10 feet. The new permit is about \$20, and this fee funds this program, as well as adding fees to a fund to create access and sites for nonmotorized boaters. Helps balance money that goes to motorized infrastructure. Also, “pull the plug law”– pull your drain plug when you leave a body of water in Oregon.

Terry Drever Gee – will we have next dates? June – Prineville. October – Enterprise. Everyone should bring calendars in June and we’ll get next years in the works for FRNs.

For the June Meeting – we have plans for some tours, revisit the Cascade fee and education on limited entry. In our agenda crafting, let’s try to have more time for round table. Useful to bring things forward.

Another idea is to have another joint meeting with the SEORAC. Is there value in this? One day of John Day Snake and one day of a joint meeting. This brings a lot of energy, provides collaboration and we are able to work across boundaries.

Dennis/Don – reminder about BLM nomination for public lands needing access.

Jerry Brummer– I heard today about a lot of partnerships. Across the board - from private to federal. This is the direction we need to go and its refreshing.

Terry – I saw the same thing. I’m impressed with how finally everyone is working together to fill in those spaces and working with the public. Keep going!

Art – for Don/Baker – during our sage-grouse discussion and putting in a wash rack. I’d suggest that you put a proposal in to the state ATV committee and emphasize that it’s grouse driven. And then my group could help fund and get a match. It might save money in the end. As far as bi-RAC meeting – maybe we could even consider a tri-RAC meeting with eastern Washington. There have been some big changes in OHV regs – class 4s, side by sides – increased the weight limit to 2500 pounds. Makes them more than a WWII Jeep! Max width is now 80 inches so basically these are full sized vehicles and they’re looking for places to play.

Glenn – I’m a bit direct, but I really appreciate the work you do every day.

Meeting Adjourned: