

## John Day Snake RAC

Meeting opened at: 12:38 p.m.

### Introductions

Agency: Bill Dean (Prineville BLM), Todd Neville (Prineville BLM), Chuck Oliver (Umatilla National Forest), Ian Reed (Wallowa-Whitman NF), Don Gonzales (Vale BLM), Stacy Forson (Ochoco NF)

RAC Members Present: Art Waugh, Erica Maltz, Steve Lent, Brian Jennings, Ben Gordon, Randy Jones, Jim Reiss, Tim Unterwegner, Glen Burleigh, Greg Jackle

Note: This meeting did not have a quorum so no decisions will be made; material presented for information and discussion only

**Review minutes:** no edits to the minutes at this point

*Question: Is the Boardman facility having problems?* Yes – with moisture of chips. Doing some testing right now, and will possibly take plant off-line this year. PGE intention is to continue with torried biomass at plant as much as they can through 2020 (get emissions data, electricity generation, etc. data). So – question now is where will we get material going forward?

### Any agenda adjustments?

- Question over hiring freeze at agencies? What's the impact?
- Purpose statement: have we heard anything re: correspondence from secretary?
- OHV trail around Walton Lake – Stacy will update?
- Too much time allocated for Snake River –
- Malheur – what's the reaction to court decision, what happened? Any changes on the ground or ramifications? Will it change any federal procedures
- Update on solar development – Crook County.
- Eclipse update

### Ian Reed – Snake River Fee Proposal

The Wild and Scenic Snake River Proposal – proposed in June 2016 for special permit fee. The Wallowa Whitman put the proposal in the Federal Register, and met with public and boater groups in Riggins, Boise, Clarkston and Joseph and took public comments. The Forest received about 650 comments from a 3 month period, with most comments not in favor of a fee (82%).

In response, a group of users formed a committee to get understanding of use and needs. While the vast majority of people don't want a fee change, what people wanted to see if there had to be a fee was pretty diverse. The least popular idea was having more law enforcement, while more popular were things like maintenance of facilities, removal of weeds, maintenance of dispersed sites, etc. The Wallowa Whitman is meeting more with this group; and will be able to incorporate their needs into the proposal. This will be a model to implement sustainable recreation – and the forest will be looking for partners, alt funding etc. to help move forward.

*Do you have a plan to use the money if you get it?* Yes, the forest has identified categories where the fees would be used. People have a lot of ideas about where the money can be used, but when we actually put out the idea for a fee, people didn't want it.

*Is the forest also looking at doing this stuff without a fee?* Yes – but we don't have enough money to do it all or do it quickly.

*Did the wave of "no fee" come up after you started?* Not really – people don't like fees. But the surprise was how organized and how strong the pushback was.

*Do you know if the user group had a counter-proposal?* Not sure – haven't heard of any, but that's the point of the committee. They'll need to talk about how else to do things and we'll be meeting with them soon (Glen could be added to the subcommittee and he can work with Randy).

*The people you're hearing from – are they local?* Most of them from Oregon, ID, WA and around the Snake River. The Wallowa Whitman will keep analyzing the data.

*Without fees, are there alternatives for protecting the rich historic heritage?* The existing permit system has terms and conditions, and the Wallowa-Whitman will continue to monitor, but that is why the fees are an important need.

*Similar to BM forest resiliency project – could this group craft a letter of support for specific budgetary support for the Snake River, particularly if we can't get to it via a fee structure.* The duty of the RAC falls within this – as we see funding decreasing we need to provide options and think outside the box. Could we get into the Subaru grant program for example? Do we recommend fees if they won't do enough? What steps are we going to take to tell the public where the money will go – the public feels better if they know (and agree) where the money is going.

Didn't want more LEO – that seems contrary to what we hear from John Day and Deschutes. Did they say why?? Don't have the specifics. Will have to share that via email or at the next meeting.

For Don – generally the RAC shies away from budgetary recommendations as it falls outside the RAC purview. Is part of REC RAC, but for overall – would it be appropriate to send a letter just asking for money.

*Ochoco* will be looking for a fee proposal update sometime in the future. And we're toying with a stewardship group to identify a need for the fee in the first place. We'll have to have our books open to show the need for the fee, and that group of citizens can help with identifying where to invest receipts. Helps tell the story, builds trust, etc. Should be able to have a RAC subcommittee that helps with this.

*Question* – with respect to fees – no one wants them – is it the norm that locals don't want fees because it prices them out etc., and non-locals support or accept fees? The Ochoco should also come out with fee that does what you need it to, so you don't have to come right back and ask for more. For the Deschutes, we're seeing a fee interest that it a little different; for John Day, most commenters were local, and they were tepid, but not anti or pro. Different group of users so maybe that is the difference. And we're seeing a shift in the conservation economy, and maybe eastern Oregon vs. other. Sometimes locals have special interests – like you give them the "splash and giggle" section for free and the rest of the objection goes away.

*Anything about dam relicensing?* Getting close to the end of the process. GOOD point – might be able to look again at Hells Canyon, Idaho Power, 4 E's, etc. because the EIS is so old. Seems like these historic/recreation sites might be candidates for protection under the process. Look at Idaho Power as a source of alternative funding.

The Wallowa Whitman had a meeting about the recreation program. Basically as a forest we need to slow the bleeding – how can we reduce services, be more sustainable, get more partners, id deferred maintenance, - both short and long term strategies? We may have to look at more fees to get less into the red. Might be worth having this group help us come up with a sustainable recreation strategy.

*Can we figure out where the money is coming from? If you have a lot of out of area, then maybe more support for fees?* The Wallowa Whitman has a group that does NVUM (national visitor use monitoring) that tracks some of this, along with what people might be willing to pay for experiences.

**COORDINATING Snake River Issues with other RACS – possible collaboration group:** Seems like some people thought it shouldn't just be a group from OR making decisions when there are ID, WA issues too.

- *Is there a purpose to this besides exchange of information? Does it get more weight?* Don will check and see if Larry made some inroads into contacting other RACS. Seems worth at least making the effort.
- Southeast Oregon RAC, for example, meets with Idaho RAC as a subcommittee – shares the workload; this can work. It also seems like a benefit to the agency – could tap into users from the Boise community.
- There is no opposition to coordinating with other RACS or populations - but if we're the body that makes the decision, we still need to be the one that makes the decision.
- Snake is about the last major river without a fee of some kind.
- RAC is sometimes a reactive body, so if we have better coordination then we can be involved earlier and at a ground level – that would to be our benefit.

**Recommend** – since next meeting is in Baker City – would be an opportunity for other RACS to join us (SW Idaho and Eastern Washington). May also get FERC, Idaho Power, etc. to show up. Energy committee can take a look at this too. Can Randy reach out to the RACS? Yes.

*Can we get a map of the RACS?* Yes.

### **Add-on Agenda Item:**

**Hiring Freeze** – this is normal; effective Jan. 22'ish, position without an effective date, are on hold. We're hoping to move forward on fire hiring as public safety; also hoping to move forward on temp and seasonal positions. Still waiting for clarity – and getting more information as it trickles in. We're trying to send up messages about the need under public safety – this includes road maintenance, etc.

**OHV Trail – Ochoco NF – Ochoco Summit:** Stacy has issued a draft ROD, and final supplemental EIS. The forest is working on this in between objections and issues with the Bailey Butte Fire. So in the last 2 years, we've been refining the proposal, responding to objections, minimizing impacts. There are still objections; so the Ochoco held an "objection resolution" meeting. The meeting was held with sideboards – Ochoco wasn't ready to go to "no action" alternative – so while it didn't get rid of all objections, the forest did identify some mitigations, monitoring, etc. to go forward to protect resources

and respond to issues, and they can implement in pieces as information and data comes in. Still working on it together. Helps to plan to phase in the project. They have a good team of specialists to look at analysis, objections, conditions, etc. to identify what needs to happen to move forward.

*Can you say anything about meetings with the county court?* The county is focused more on CC Natural Resource Plan.

*Is there an opinion on how a trail around Walton Lake would harm this area?* Art was more involved on the Class II routes in other areas but thinks it will be a challenge for compliance. The Ochoco will have to work with legitimate users to give them space, and work with LEO and staff to get compliance from other users. ODFW's concern is that we're having a hard time keeping elk on public land – not just on the Ochocos. When they're harassed, they move. Even legal recreation drives them off and it hurts archery season and leads to high road densities. ODFW will still need to look at impacts, the phase in options, season of use, etc. The Forest is willing to go the extra mile to do telemetry to find out where the elk are calving, etc. and having this information will help us be better managers across the board in the future.

*Do we need to follow up on this at the next meeting?* Yes, at least an update. Stacy can decide if there's enough for a whole agenda item. Will share this also with the Recreation subcommittee.

### **Deschutes River Fee Subcommittee Update:**

See handout. Swapped Chris Perry for Brian Sykes. Thanks for efforts of subcommittee, Carol, Todd, Jeff, etc.

- Some guides interested in “all users” fee; parking stickers, day use fees. And all the extra questions like “what about bringing my dog down to swim for 20 minutes.” Hard to get a feel for everything.
- Still some questions about enforcement – but overall there's a feeling that this can be successful.
- Seems like this broke some ice by getting some funding from some different users. It may not bring in a lot of money, but it shares the responsibility.
- \$5 per person/day float fee – falls in line with BLM business plan and needs. Will help offset management needs.
- \$5 per person/night camping fee – revenue is not substantial; however, it is a good start and it will help. Will absolutely need to show how we're spending it. Applies to non-roaded, segments in I and IV.
- Managers Group supported the \$5/day and the camping fee. And group will come back in the future.
- Made the window of one year, with mgmt. team support.
- Recreation.gov is also a challenge – includes a \$6 fee which is over and above the fees they're already paying.
- Collected one season of use from the mouth to Macks (counters on the trail) – need to get more.
- Will you pay for camping on rec.gov? Not initially – have to build it into program, and then people who camp or walk in need to learn about Rec.gov

*Would encourage management team to really look at how to set the numbers, and be able to articulate this. The levels were set based on analysis of other rivers at that time, and taking a look at the type of use on the Deschutes. At that time, they used the process they had available, for getting numbers that were manageable for resources and experience. We need to do more documenting going forward.*

So for fee, of the \$5 – \$3 to BLM, \$2 to State; for camping all \$5 to BLM).

*So how much money would we get from camping fee really. Would it be better to wait for all user fee in 3 years? We need to make sure we have a discussion about this. Are we getting our money's worth to annoy people and have the hassle of collection? Just for discussion sake...*

We need to identify if the proposed fee will get us what we need! We may only get one bite of the apple and we should make it work the first time.

***Overall the full RAC would like to see the proposal but in a more concise motion, with a timeline, etc.***

If we do a Fed. Register Notice and post the fee proposal at various areas, etc. we can get public input, and then make a decision based on that? It seems like that process would work with managers group too. We need to get out there – most people don't know about the Federal Register. We should put out what's reasonable so that the public doesn't go crazy.

For fees, we know it won't cover everything. But it may help regulate numbers, etc.

We just want to make sure that we can come back after public process and we get more data and we can adjust if needed before a final decision.

Would suggest that RAC would approve a recommendations as preliminary step, then the BLM would proceed with public comment and then the RAC can make a final decision after public input. **Suggest:**

- 1. Preliminary vote on subcommittee recommendation**
- 2. Trigger public review process**
- 3. Come back and have a final vote after public input.**

Managers group looked at two steps: \$5/day doesn't require as much outreach because it's a change; the camping fee requires FR because it's new.

**Put the Lower Deschutes Fee back on the agenda for May: present proposal as a motion, without minutes, etc. Make it simple and clear. Put a footnote into briefing, about how each committee member voted/felt and why. Kind of like they do with Supreme Court Decisions.**

### **Email Voting:**

Email what does it look like? The RAC should have already had a motion, and a second in a quorum, and had discussion (this is the public involvement part). The purpose of the email is to just take the vote. There's an email voting form that shows motion, the second, a brief description of motion, a discussion if needed. Form is sent prior to the vote so people can consider.

*Can people contribute on the phone to make a quorum? Yes.*

Reply "ALL" on votes so people see everything. Include the BLM facilitator as the "tabulator" of the votes.

*Some still not OK with email voting.* Remember – the vote can't occur without prior discussion. Want to make sure we have all the discussion done – no questions, discussion, etc. by email – can't exclude the public from the process.

Remember, email voting "***if necessary***" – and remember to be transparent, and can pass the red-faced test.

This is a way to respond to time-sensitive issues, NOT to avoid coming to the meeting. People can call in to participate in meetings when meetings don't align with deadlines and scheduling.

*Do we want phone call to count as quorum and attendance? And be able to vote?*

**Public Comment Period: no comments in person or on the phone.**

In addition: we should look at other options for interaction such as Facetime, Go to Meeting, Skype, etc. (Brian will try to investigate).

***Suggest for May meeting: send out draft of email form; work with Brian to come up with some tools to meet.***

As a RAC we need to identify how to come up with dates: we have them set in advance, work as a group. *Should we get 1 ½ year of dates so we can put them out when we recruit?*

***Don and Lisa will put out a new committee and member list; update BLM membership list on website.***

**VACANCY RECRUITMENT STRATEGY:**

We have flexibility in what we look for in a recruit. Right now we don't have ranching/grazing represented for example...The Southeast Oregon RAC says they hope people who are leaving will recruit replacements; should RAC members help recruit.

*Are there limitations on who we can contact?* Not really – we can contact groups, individuals, etc. You can actively recruit in public meetings, collaborative groups, etc.

- We should include the cattleman's voice in this body – reach out to OCA, etc.
- Wise to focus some formal effort on a Grant county person – can we strategically recruit someone who can help us move through conflict.
- Invite people to come and participate – see how the process works.
- The DFO and agency folks should get together to identify needs based on what's coming up – then work with RAC chair to recruit.

*Should we have "we always meet" days like the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the third month?*

**DFO/Randy – can send out who's expiring, what gaps we have, what we need based on future plans, and then everyone can recruit. Also send Randy the categories, checklists, etc.**

**Doodle poll for next meeting dates; and maybe we can hammer out fixed dates for the future.**

Adjourn

## January 27, 2017

### Convene at: 8:04

*Is there a status on the letter to Secretary?* – Don says it's still in process as far as he can see. Will try to follow up with the SO/Director.

*What is the role of education on the RAC – for the RAC? With respect to connections with universities, in regards to votes for outdoor school, etc. Is there a dent we can make in a positive way?* For example maybe we have a student position as a non-voting member sitting in on the RAC? Is that allowed? Are there research topics a subcommittee wants to address but needs help – partnerships with students, instructors or classes? This could include Congressional actions to divest public lands for example – could we help facilitate options to get rid of some small parcels (e.g. ones already being used as a shooting range, land-locked, etc.) and not the bigger possibilities of giving away public land?

**Brian and Randy will take a first look at this idea. Will bring back ideas to May agenda.**

### Federal Updates:

#### Prineville BLM

See handout

#### Ochoco NF – Stacy

See handout.

#### Vale BLM

See handout

*Are things on track with sage-grouse protection?* We are implementing all our efforts on keeping the grouse population from declining. We're getting back in after fire and planting 1 million sagebrush seedlings, we're minimizing disturbance, and we're getting partners and funding to help. Ranchers are trying too. *Have you translocated birds?* It's hard because they have site fidelity. The males are imprinted on a spot so it's hard to move them. Seems like we could try to put grouse on abandoned or historic leks. WA population was supplemented with translocated birds.

#### Wallowa Whitman NF –

Forest Plan Revision (on-going) –We need to get preliminary ROD and final EIS out by end of June. New personnel, Section 7 Consultation, are issues. We're working with State wildlife staff – particularly over elk – road densities, habitat, forage, - and interest on bighorn sheep, integrating Aquatic and Riparian conservation strategy. And then taking all this and messaging with public, partners, agencies, permittees. *Question: deer/elk have been management indicators in the past, how do the plans use wildlife indicators now?* We've moved away from indicators as seen in HEI but we're using "focal" species.

Lower Joseph Creek Project – first one completed by eastside restoration team. Close to final ROD (next couple of weeks), 55k acres of prescribed fire/thinning treatment in Wallowa county.

East Face – joint NRCS and Forest Service project with work on state and private land too. Good partnership – done a bunch of fuels work on this, some pre-commercial thinning, and now getting some timber harvest this year.

Salvage on Rail Fire on-going. Sale is advertised but not awarded.

Rappel base – new base being constructed at the La Grande airport to consolidate two rappel crews.

### **Umatilla National Forest**

See handout

*Comment to all forests:* Would like to see stump cleanup along highways – it's important. Go back after thinning in visible areas and flush cut the stumps in visible areas. We require this on fires – saw teams have to do this – would like to see the same in non-fire projects

### **Deschutes National Forest**

*How is Crescent Lake cabin?* In the rental system, looking good. Don't have use numbers today.

We're also looking at other sites: Cabin Lake, Oddfellows Cabin, Deschutes Bridge Guard Station and other historic sites are on the list to upgrade, and ask for recreation rental. Looking at alternate funding sources too like Secure Rural Schools. Also evaluating the type of use: just interpretive, rental, etc. Still trying to figure out Cabin Lake options – maybe even a lease option. We have a lot of historic facilities that need help so we're trying to prioritize.

*Other areas have these kinds of buildings – like small cabins along Hells Canyon. Can we get more of these on rental lists?* They don't have to be fixed up necessarily – primitive works too. People would be interested if they knew how to get involved. Fall River has been in the rental program and we've extended the season thru November – almost fully occupied all the time. It pays for itself. We can take revenue that goes beyond operations costs, to bring other sites up to standards.

As you progress thru evaluating options for these structures – that could be an option for students to evaluate. They can look at condition and future use. Great fodder for ideas.

We also look at ideas like caretakers, and our sustainable recreation use strategy – our backlog of deferred maintenance means that some hard decisions will have to be made. We can't afford the minimum safety upgrades at this time. All the forests are open to volunteers and support from other sources, and we'll keep trying.

*Rager Ranger Station* – lots of historic facilities, Ochoco looking at rental opportunities. There is community interest – maybe the county can get involved. Central Oregon Patriots hosting a meeting about it at the library. Needs safety upgrades, so it's important to be open about costs and needs. We also look at other groups taking on a special use permit and that group offers it as a rental. Rager is big and remote – lots of ideas like a youth camp, etc. We hope to protect old CCC buildings. *Question: if the county gets involved in maintenance, etc. what requirements would be in place as to who can use it?* We still working out options like that – they'd have to meet safety, carry insurance, test water, etc. and since it's still FS property, public can still visit. But if a group wanted to run it as a camp, that's a different permit and different requirements. We are just listening right now – we'd have to get an actual proposal



to evaluate that. *Divide Ranger Station – what’s the plan?* Lots of sites and our next move is to prioritize what the Ochoco can do.

### **Blue Mountain Forest Resiliency Project:**

Still moving forward and still running into issues like personnel changes, and we’re pulling back and forth between this and forest plans.

David Hatfield is now team lead and will start scheduling meetings to address public comments and develop alternatives. We’re hoping to get alternatives done by March and maybe a draft by the end of the calendar year.

Fire piece – how to address fuels breaks along roads, prioritizing values at risk, and deciding how to deal with them.

This is a lesson in transition. We have been using new tools, bigger scales, bigger planning, and now we need to pull in other lessons from other projects and be responsive to what we’ve already learned. We need to help get this across the finish line before we get some of the other big projects rolling. We hope to see a success with Lower Joseph so we can take that and move forward. We are changing what we were doing – we used to say do all the analysis up front, and now we’re saying “let’s do a little less.”

*How do you weigh the comments that are positive? It seems like we only listen to the objections and we put a lot of effort into “fixing” things for the possible objectors. How do we give supporters a voice? It is a balancing act but we need to give credit for the good comments too. Remember – objectors may also be supportive, they just want to fix “one thing.” We need to be able to show a judge that we’ve brought in all voices – good and bad. And we don’t always resolve all the objections.*

*After going through scoping, you added a 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative – it was meant to address all the laws and regulations we have to address without adjusting the forest plans. We have eastside screens, policies, and regulations, so some of the fuel screens fell into cold, moist forest and we needed to bring that up separately.*

*Pace and scale on over 610K acres. Is there an economic argument over the same acres put toward biomass instead of Rx fire. Would there be a value to this material as an energy or chip product instead of burning it? It’s a tough option. We need to have a market for it, but it’s hard to predict now when we’re doing the NEPA, if there’ll be a market at the time we need it. Needs to be cost effective. But is a very good thought and option.*

**Umatilla NF – See handout**

**Deschutes NF – see handout**

## **Fall meeting – where should we meet? Topics?**

Ben – is John Day an option again?

Brian – would love to have a tour of the set-aside for elk; **checker board tour**

Randy – on the ground responses to **Canyon Creek**

Middle fork – for the tribe, there's a lot going on in the Logan Valley, and more in the Beech creek.

Ochoco Lumber **torrefaction plant**? They have a lot of research going on there.

**How can RAC members submit agenda items?** Our voice and the topics we entertain can have weight. We all have our own engagements in topics that are worthy. Our DFO has responsibility to develop agendas; however, we do have a collaborative air that allows suggestions about issues, speakers, ideas, etc.

Send ideas to Randy – and he'll forward. He'll make a form, but you can just send ideas too.

Keep range of ideas coming: field trips, learning topics?

**Can we get briefing papers PRIOR to the meeting? Same for any RAC member updates.**

**Have some subcommittee work time at next meeting.**

**Send out draft agenda at the same time as the FR notice.**

**Agency officials should also be more proactive about what's coming up and giving the group a little direction.**

### **BIN ITEMS AND ROUND ROBIN:**

**County Solar Development:** seeing large scale solar developments coming in Prineville area. We have data center links – power going to Apple, FB, and there are still tax credits. Private landowners being solicited to lease land for \$1200/acre/year. Expect to see growth in this area. Businesses are working with county – but we need to be ahead of the game – what's an acre of solar farm to an acre of wildlife habitat. And energy projects are coming in just under the 320-acre limit, which minimizes regulatory mechanisms. So far, folks are working well, and adding mitigations for conservation, etc. but who knows where it will go. Looking to add avoidance areas, conservation easements, etc. to counter. Also get ahead and focus developments in areas that have less impact because of existing powerlines, etc. Will be limited in sage grouse habitat; but we need to keep an eye on loss of other habitat. The counties have wildlife mitigation in the plans, but usually really old or no teeth. So ODFW brings recommendations to the county, but if county planners don't like mitigations then it's a delicate negotiation.

At Oct 7 meeting, Jen Masters said RAC can make recommendations to increase budgetary support for certain projects? What do people think? Also would make sure the recommendation HAS to stay within agency. Anything outside is lobbying. Don't want to tie our options too - Comes down to trust – if we trust fed officers to prioritize projects and focus on the important things, then we don't want to be second guessing

**Maybe we can target a top project or 3 and express support for budgetary emphasis. If you look down the road and can see a greater benefit (e.g. reduce fire danger) if we can push it forward, and funding can help do that – then it might be a good option.**

**Art: What about a letter from the RAC to recommend vehicle undercarriage washes to help with invasives – informational paragraph to include on travel management maps.** We have a lot out there - four Wheel Drive working with COHVOPS on Rim Butte system – 24 miles of Class II 4wd trails – most put in with volunteers. Also awaiting implementation of John Day Basin OHV component – with Little Canyon Mtn open pit and two other smaller open areas. Along with Rudio Mountain seasonal open area. Still a ways out on the Ochoco route.

**Erica:**

- **Salmon Fishery in Malheur** a possibility for the first time in years. They found a ton of live chinook about 6 miles from where they were released – shows that # fish put in aren't sufficient to meet catch rates. In 32 miles, looked for redds/fish – found many more females than supposed to be. Offspring of hatchery could be listed – working through issue of that offspring wouldn't have listing status in this area. Trying to make this the most efficient fishery. (take a look at west side where hatchery fish are living – using reservoir as “ocean.”)
- *Notice for bull trout recovery plan in late October* – position is based on 5 tribe policy analysis that looked at implications for delisting. Concerned that without listing for bull trout, we wouldn't have tools to recover populations where numbers are low. To the RAC, we need help making sure tribes are seen as sovereign nations, not the “public.”
- **Hells Canyon** – still working more collaboratively with the State of Oregon. State put out unified position from the Governor's office – now a national resource policy advisor. Optimistic that we'll be able to continue with ceremonial fisheries and reintroductions.
- **Brook Trout removal** – they get 14 days to remove with gill nets; they've taken out up to half the population; and missed 2 years due to fire and it's like they were never there. Looking at basin wide level, - how do we deal with these? Spawning, recreation fishery, etc.

**Steve:** There's a political change in Crook County - new judge, and two new commissioners – and new judge in Wheeler; The High Desert Museum has a display on the military in the high desert. I'm speaking at local charter school on the timber industry. Saturday – giving a presentation to Jefferson County cattleman's association;

**Brian:** welcome Glen to the RAC! He's earned his way here and we're glad to have him!!! Thanks from Backcounty Hunters and Anglers and his constituents. 25K members, and 18 chapters. Big issues – concerned with privatization of public lands and will fight to keep lands public; Frank Moore set-aside for wild steelhead sanctuary (dynamite hole). Hiked 100 miles in England, and was able to get a sense of perspective of how special Oregon is.

**Ben:** Change in ONDA based on attacks on public lands; while still focus on Wilderness – and building new emphasis on support for all public lands. Bringing a lot of groups under a bigger tent – finding common ground. With Malheur occupation, inquiries from 1400 people to say “what can we do” and they've been leading restoration trips and offering volunteer help. Still oversee John Day campaign, but focusing much more on stewardship opportunities. He has about 35 options (planting, thinking, fence pulling, trail work, etc.) – he'll send out program list.

**Randy:** pass

**Jim:** for next meeting, hoping to bring preliminary decision on Deschutes boater fee. When is the Fremont map supposed to be available? Hoping by June along with a new exhibit.

**Tim:** Grant Co. about 15 years ago passed an initiative petition to allow a Public Forest Commission. This year the former county judge asked for a circuit ruling on validity of commission – ruled illegal. These people wanted to have a stake in managing the forest. Now, they want to revalidate the commission to make it legal. People are tying blue ribbons on houses in support of feds and state employees and leos.

Restoration on middle fork – fish salvage so they can restore 6,000 feet of old flood plain, adding meander to increase stream function. Share video with RAC – Warm Springs and Wahoo films – Oxbow project. *Ben will share link.* Outdoor dream foundation – hunts for terminally ill kid. They got a 12 year old from Michigan – really rewarding. Tim helped with camp. Trip on his bucket list – boated 220 miles of John Day on 14 days.

**Glenn:** thanks! Went Monday to meeting at Bend library meeting on biomass. Hope to go to more, learned a lot. Helps him stay in touch with all sides.

**Greg:** ODFW still concerned with tough winter. After 1992, mule deer pops went down. Wonder if we'll see the same this year. We have 500 collars out, so we'll see what happens. Capturing and collaring more in the next few weeks – but will stop if capture mortality rises above 3%. Getting data across an enormous area. Cougars in La Pine – multiple cougars, female with young, coming into town because of snow – ate chickens and livestock and pets. And staying around houses. This is a normal consequence of a tough winter.

**May 18-19 in Baker.**

Interested in: sage grouse, lek causal factor, Sustainable Rec, Snake River fees, Field trip, Hells Canyon relicensing, Boaterpass.com, Next positions, upcoming, outreach.

*[Handwritten signature]*

## Prineville District – Bureau of Land Management Briefing Paper – January 2017

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### DISTRICT WIDE:

#### Prineville Invasive Plant Environmental Assessment (EA)

The Bureau of Land Management Prineville District (BLM) issued a decision to expand its existing 2004 integrated noxious weed management program by increasing the number of herbicides available for use from 4 to 14. The decision also allowed for the use of herbicides on non-native invasive plants, not just State-listed noxious weeds. Use of the new herbicides was analyzed in the 2010 Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon, Final Environmental Impact Statement (2010 FEIS).

*Update:* The decision was recently appealed to the IBLA and we are anticipating a favorable ruling.

#### Multiple Grazing Permit Renewal Environmental Assessment

The Prineville District completed the Multiple Grazing Permit Renewal EA #1, which renews grazing permits or leases, and installs new and maintains existing range developments on 16 allotments in the District. The District has initiated the planning process for a second set of Multiple Grazing Permit Renewal EAs.

*Update:* The Prineville District has begun work on a Multiple Grazing Permit EA #2, which is looking at renewing grazing permits or leases in three allotments.

#### 2017 Solar Eclipse

The Prineville District is participating on several committees in preparation for the 2017 Solar Eclipse including the Jefferson and Crook County committees and the Governor's Task Force. The Forest Service and BLM are also working at a Regional level to provide incident management support to the various Districts and Forests in the path of totality by assigning a National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) that can provide big-picture organization, planning and logistics. BLM and FS are also working on a strategy to address increased law enforcement, recreation/public contact, and fire suppression staffing for the event.

*Update:* Events are being proposed both before and during the eclipse that will require special recreation permits (SRPs) from the BLM. These include a bicycle and running race near Madras, OR and potentially the creation of a temporary camping area with reservable sites near Mitchel, OR.



## **CENTRAL OREGON RESOURCE AREA:**

### **Ratray Property Acquisition**

BLM is proposing to acquire approximately 11,500 acres on the John Day River. At this point, the Ratray property acquisition is moving forward in three phased transactions. The properties consist of lands purchased by Western Rivers from the Ratray and the Campbell estates. Funding for the purchase of these lands comes from the Land and Water Conservation Funds.

The properties would transition into the federal land base with the usual process, and will include maintaining grazing privileges to be exercised by Western Rivers under BLM oversight.

### **Teaters Road**

The Prineville District was notified last spring that Teaters Road would be closed to public access. Teaters Road extends several miles through private land, and the landowners (Waibel Ranches, LLC) installed gates on the road to prevent access by the general public. Waibels have said the closure is due to years of trespassing, illegal hunting on private land, off-road vehicle damage, illegal antler hunting and littering.

**Update:** The BLM Prineville District Office and Waibel Ranches, LLC are working cooperatively to find a solution to the 2015 closure of Teaters Road that will restore public access from Highway 380 (Paulina Highway) north to the North Fork Crooked River area and the Ochoco National Forest. Under a mutually acceptable resolution, Waibel Ranches, LLC is building a new, high-quality road to the west of Teaters Road, solely on private property and at its own expense. The new road will be donated to Crook County upon completion and will become a Local Access Road. Teaters Road was re-opened for the 2016 fall hunting season, and if the new road is still not complete and open by August 1, 2017, Teaters Road would be opened again for public use until the new road is complete and available for public use.

After the new road is complete, the BLM intends to initiate an EA to consider: relinquishing some or all of its rights under its existing easement on Teaters Road, providing maintenance on the new road, and accepting an easement and/or right-of-way from the County on the new road, as well as any other related realty actions concerning isolated parcels of public land within the Waibel Ranches, LLC property.

### **Murderers Creek JMA Wild Horse Management Plan**

The Malheur National Forest is currently working with BLM input on an analysis of the Appropriate Management Level for the Murderers Creek herd. The Forest is also working on an EIS to analyze alternatives for a Wild Horse Management Plan. Portions of the analysis are currently being reviewed by the USFS-Region 6 and Washington Office. Scoping isn't expected to begin until late 2016/early 2017.

### **Murderers Creek HMA Wild Horse Gather EA**

While the Malheur is completing an EIS for managing the Murderers Creek herd, BLM is continuing to prepare a separate EA that will cover BLM management of the herd. After the decision and analysis is final, BLM will attempt to get on the national gather schedule; gathers would be prioritized on a national level based on the needs/issues of other states, private land nuisance horses, available holding capacity, as well as other factors.



## **Cottonwood Canyon**

Cottonwood Canyon State Park encompasses a checkerboard of State (8,100 acres) and BLM (10,171 acres) land. Western Rivers purchased the private parcels collectively known as the Murtha Ranch in 2008 and sold 8,008 acres to Oregon State Parks and Recreation (OPRD) for the state park. BLM is preparing an EA looking at various alternatives to provide the public with a seamless recreation experience and enhance resource values in and around the new park, and would allow the construction of 20 miles of trails.

**Update:** Work on the Cottonwood Canyon EA was temporarily postponed to accommodate other priority work. The EA will result in a definitive long-term Cooperative Management Agreement between the OPRD and the BLM. The EA is expected to go out for public comment in late January 2017, with a draft agreement scheduled for release in Feb 2017. The final Cooperative Management Agreement should be signed by March 2017.

## **Spring Basin**

The Prineville District has processed two legislatively directed land exchanges pursuant to Section 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, and the Omnibus Public Land Management Act. The 2009 Act contains many provisions, including the designation of the Spring Basin Wilderness Area in Wheeler County, Oregon, and provides for land exchanges with adjacent property owners, including Hugh Kelly and Rosemary McGreer and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO). These land exchanges will consolidate land ownership patterns and improve manageability for all parties.

The Federal lands involved in the McGreer exchange are located in Wasco County, and the non-Federal lands are located in Wheeler County. In the CTWSRO exchange, both the Federal and non-Federal lands are located in Wheeler County. This general vicinity is approximately 12 miles southwest of the town of Fossil and 16 miles east of the town of Antelope. All of the subject lands are situated between river miles 109 to 133, next to the Pine Creek Conservation Area.

The Notice of Decision for the CTWSRO Land Exchange and the McGreer Land Exchange was signed January 8, 2016, and the Notices went out for a 45-day protest period. The Finding of No Significant Impact and the Decision Record were also signed.

**Next action:** The McGreer land exchanges are complete, and BLM is working on final steps for the CTWSRO land exchange, including finalizing issues with the Deferred Tax Liability, and expect to be done by the end of the calendar year.

## **John Day River – 2016 Season (10/1/2015 to 9/30/2016)**

BLM collects fees for trips that are on the water during the peak use season of May 20 and July 10 between Service Creek and Tumwater Falls; BLM collects \$10 per group for a one-day trip, \$20 per group for an overnight trip. During the 2016 peak use season, there were 110 one-day permits and 705 overnight permits issued during for 4,969 boaters. For these trips, BLM collected \$15,110 in boating use fees.

The number of boaters was up 39% over 2015 use, with the greatest increase in Segment 2 (Clarno to Cottonwood), which saw a 66% increase in use. Much of the 2016 increase is attributed to better flows (we experienced a low water year in 2015).

Overall boater use days recorded in Segments 1, 2 and 3 (Service Creek to Tumwater Falls) were 21,378 (A boater use day is one person boating the river for any part of one day).

## **John Day Boater Pass Program**



The current Boater Pass system for the John Day River is having technical issues and is not operational. The BLM is working diligently to resolve the situation. Furthermore, it is the BLM's intent to migrate this system to Recreation.gov in the next two years.

**Mallory Creek Road Rehabilitation Project**

BLM employees just finished working on the first phase of a project that would re-route a road along Mallory Creek. The project is designed to restore Mallory Creek to a condition more suitable to steelhead spawning and rearing while also helping to improve water quality conditions. Mallory Creek drains approximately 20,000 acres into the North Fork John Day River between the towns of Monument and Dale and provides important cold water fish habitat including spawning for Mid-Columbia Summer Steelhead.

The present location of the road requires two river fords on the lower portion of the creek, one of which has captured the majority of the flow for about 100 feet, requiring one to drive up the stream channel itself while traveling the road.

Staff will remove, rehabilitate, and relocate approximately 1.3 miles of road that travels within the floodplain and channel of Mallory Creek. The upper 0.55 miles and lower 0.29 miles of the closed road will be rehabilitated so as to not continue to be a sediment source to Mallory Creek. The middle section of the road located along the hillside and a 1.2 mile long spur road will be closed and allowed to recover naturally. The new route will be constructed and open prior to the old route being closed to the public.

**Update:** At this point most of the work on the lower crossing is complete, and work on the upper crossing is expected to continue next year.

**Glass Buttes Radio Station Project:**

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to construct a radio station facility on the top of Glass Buttes on BLM-managed land and improve portions of an existing dirt road largely on BLM-managed land leading to proposed facility. The BLM is the lead agency for this project and has been assisted greatly by BPA throughout this process. BLM has previously consulted with the CTWSRO and learned that the Glass Buttes landform is an area of interest for the CTWSRO and a usual and accustomed station. Previous consultation between the Burns Paiute Tribe (BPT), CTWSRO, Klamath Tribes, BPA, and BLM at the peak of Glass Butte yielded an agreement on mitigation measures to move the project forward.

At present, the BLM has completed a draft project Programmatic Agreement (PA) with all parties involved to meet, in part, the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for the proposed project, and to follow through with the results of previous and ongoing tribal consultation.

**Update:** The BLM Prineville District has completed a draft EA and is currently conducting Section 106 review and consultation with the Burns Paiute Tribe (BPT), CTWSRO, Klamath Tribes, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and BPA for the Glass Buttes Radio Station Project. American Tower and AT&T have also been present to varying degrees during review and consultation since the beginning of this process, and currently AT&T is proposing to build their own tower facilities at Glass Buttes. AT&T previously agreed to conduct Section 106 survey for their project, but have not initiated that survey yet with the agreed upon archaeological contractor.





## **DESCHUTES RESOURCE AREA:**

### **Emergency Egress Crooked River Ranch**

The Crooked River Ranch (CRR) currently does not have an adequate secondary access route in the case of fire or other emergency. There are several dirt roads and routes in the Steamboat Rock area that would provide access to the Lower Bridge Road, and that could be used, but all are inadequate for handling any amount of traffic in an emergency situation and all are within Deschutes County. The CRR has expressed interest in establishing a new road, identified a route, and applied for a right-of-way to develop a secondary access route. The CRR would be responsible for construction and maintenance of the route to meet their needs. Public scoping letters went out in October and November.

**Update:** Comments have been collected and analyzed per the public scoping. An initial draft EA is being written.

### **Jefferson County – Rails to Trails FLAP Grant**

Jefferson County, with support from the BLM, submitted a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant to obtain funds to make improvements on a 7-mile stretch of an old railroad bed Right-of-Way that the County owns down Willow Creek (Madras NE to Lake Billy Chinook). This is part of the county's existing "Rails to Trails" project, and would be a new funding system to help pay for a trail bridge to cross a drainage, route the trail around a collapsed tunnel, address noxious weeds and a small area of trash dumping.

**Update:** This project fell below the cutoff for available funding this year, and was not funded. The Federal Highways Administration expects another FLAP grant open period by the end of 2018.

### **Township 16S, Range 18E, Section 8 Resolution**

The Prineville District is still working to resolve an occupancy trespass between BLM and a local landowner. The current property owner purchased land northeast of Prineville Reservoir in 2008. Although the current property owner thought they were only buying private land, it turned out the previous landowner had built a second home about a .5 mile onto public lands.

Options to resolve the trespass include having the current occupant remove the house and structures, selling a portion of the affected public land parcel, conducting a land exchange, or issuing a land use agreement that would exist through the current landowner's lifetime. The proposed action by the current landowner is to purchase a portion of public land that would include the home and other encumbrances. To address this proposal or any other alternatives, the BLM will complete an environmental analysis. This will include addressing any wildlife habitat issues, including sage-grouse, as well as considering impacts to cultural and other natural resources.

**Update:** Currently the BLM is working to complete a survey of the public land parcels, initiate the scoping process associated with the environmental analysis, and working with our Washington and state offices to answer any questions they have in regard to the project. We are looking to release the initial scoping letter this winter. We plan to complete cultural survey work and consultation, as well as work with ODFW on wildlife mitigation and conservation measures next spring.



### **Newberry Geothermal**

The BLM has offered approximately 6000 acres of National Forest System lands for competitive geothermal leasing. The decision adopted the U.S. Forest Service's October 2014 Final EA for the Newberry Geothermal Consent to Lease Project and fully incorporates the USFS' leasing stipulations for protection of other resources on the lands to be offered as identified in that Agency's Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact signed on October 9, 2014, signed by the Forest Supervisor for the Deschutes National Forest.

The lands offered for geothermal leasing are situated in Deschutes County, Oregon, within the USFS' Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District, approximately 15 miles nearly due east of the community of La Pine. The parcels are located outside the boundary of the 50,000 acre Newberry National Volcanic Monument, with several parcels situated immediately adjacent to the Monument.

With this sale, **only** the leases themselves would be available and any development or exploration would require an additional application by the lease holder and NEPA completed by the Prineville District.

### **Boater Pass System Upgrade**

The BLM worked with Active Network (a government contractor) to negotiate a transition of the Lower Deschutes Boater Pass system to a new system to be operated by *Recreation.gov*. The new system includes several improvements requested by boaters, including;

- A seven-day block release, which makes it easier to purchase a boater pass for a multi-day trip; and
- A release time for new blocks of passes 7:30 AM instead of midnight.

The system went online January 4, 2017. The BLM is currently working with its partners and those communities that may be most affected by this change to offer training and support needs. A public meeting was held in Maupin in January that afforded members of the public the opportunity to have a Q&A with BLM staff. BLM staff have also scheduled another meeting in February.

### **Special Recreation Permit- IBLA Decision**

In the fall of 2016 the Prineville District implemented a prospectus process for accepting applications for new non-motorized guiding special recreation permits (SRPs) on the Lower Deschutes River. In September 2016, the BLM implemented the competitive prospectus process to solicit applications from interested outfitters and guides. The BLM offered new special recreation permits; up to 5% of the total number of current permit holders (which is ~80). Therefore, 4 new permits will be available to be issued in 2017. The application period was open until November 28, 2017. As this is the first year for implementing this process it will be considered a pilot and may be adjusted next year based upon feedback from the outfitting community.

**Update:** At the close of the application period, Prineville had received 12 applications and is beginning the review process this month.

### **Segment 3 Environmental Assessment**

In recent years, extended whitewater rafting trips have floated Segment 2 (Harpham to Sandy Beach), portaged Sherars Falls, and then floated four more miles from Buckhollow to Pine Tree. This increased whitewater day-use is taking a majority of allocated passes during Limited Entry weekends resulting in fewer passes being available for other boaters in the remainder of Segment 3. Limited Entry implementation as called for by the Lower Deschutes Management Plan (the Plan) is continuing to reduce available passes by 10% per year.

The managing agencies formed an inter-agency technical team to assist with writing and reviewing an EA to consider how changing boating use levels in Segment 3 and/or adjusting



segment boundaries would affect the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) identified in the Plan.

**Segment 3 EA Decision:** On June 21st the Lower Deschutes Managers Group considered and approved a recommendation made by the Interagency Technical Team. It was:

*Divide Segment 3 into two separate segments, 3A (Buckhollow to Pine Tree) and 3B (Pine Tree to Macks Canyon). Segment 3A would have a daily limit of 300, and Segment 3B would have a daily limit 250. These daily limits would be implemented seven days a week. Segment 3A would have a seasonal target limit of 15,000, and Segment 3B would have a seasonal target limit of 13,600. If the seasonal target is exceeded in two consecutive years, a 10 percent reduction would be made to the daily limit on that segment after the second year the target is exceeded. This proposal would not require boaters to pass through Segment 3A.*

The recommendation also highlighted how limited entry would be triggered and clarified that the group size limit from Buckhollow to Pine Tree was increased from 16 to 24, effective in 2016.

**Update:** The BLM issued a Decision Record for the EA and the Lower Deschutes Managers has amended the Plan to incorporate the EA Decision. The agreed upon changes will be fully implemented for the 2018 season.

**Opal Springs Fish Passage**

The primary purpose of the project is to redesign Opal Dam to benefit the reintroduction of salmonids into the Crooked River system. The redesign entails a proposed increase in the maximum authorized pool elevation, which will create water credits that the fisheries managers can use for fish passage while allowing the Deschutes Valley Water District (DVWD) to generate the same amount of power that it is currently. BLM's involvement to date has been working with DVWD to prevent impacts to the Wild and Scenic River upstream of the dam and as well as working on a right-of-way (ROW) to cover the entire Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) project. We are currently reviewing comments submitted during the scoping and public review process for an EA done to renew the Dam's FERC license.

**Update:** Based upon public input and in partnership with several stakeholders, the BLM is working to determine the appropriate level of NEPA analysis to grant the ROW.

**Ferry Canyon Site**

The Ferry Canyon Site consists of two buildings circa 1908, a ferry landing location, and a wagon road. The site is important for its role as a temporary headquarters for the Oregon Trunk Railway (OTR) during construction of their tracks, circa 1908–1911. The loss of several historical buildings associated with commerce and agriculture at the site in the last half century have negatively impacted its classification as distinguishable historical entity. Furthermore, there are concerns related to access of the site by the public given there is no granted access across the railroad from the river. The BLM is currently working with the State Historic Preservation Office to determine if the site is eligible for the historic register.

**Oregon Spotted Frog Management Plan**

The Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF), a federally listed threatened species, is found in the southwest portion of the Prineville District in the La Pine area. The Prineville District had sites surveyed in collaboration with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey last spring. Current work includes habitat suitability surveys, range infrastructure surveys, and areas of concern related to general recreation (e.g. mudding) in critical habitat. There were no permit renewals for allotments that occurred in OSF habitat this year, and a prioritization process is occurring.



Feasibility, research and efforts for habitat restoration is ongoing. The major concerns for managing OSF habitat are impacts by invasive species (e.g. reed canary grass). Informal Consultation with USFWS occurred for the Weed Treatment EA, and a buffer was applied to create a No Effect call to OSF and their Critical Habitat.

**Cove Palisades State Park and Surrounding Public Lands**

The BLM is currently working with our federal and state partners to clarify land ownership and administrative authority on public lands surrounding Lake Billy Chinook. As part of this process the BLM is also looking at possibly R&PP lease opportunities with Oregon State Parks.



# Briefing Paper

Pacific Northwest Region – Ochoco National Forest

## Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National Grassland - Updates

John Day – Snake RAC, January 2017

**2017 Solar Eclipse Planning:** The Ochoco National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland are engaged in monthly meetings with county emergency managers, the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, the Prineville BLM, and the Governor's office, to share information and coordinate a public safety response during next year's solar eclipse event on August 21. Predictions call for more than 100,000 tourists coming to Central Oregon during the eclipse. There are many related safety concerns among local communities, businesses, and government agencies. The National Forests in Central Oregon will remain engaged with local stakeholders throughout the coming year to ensure next year's event is as safe and enjoyable as possible for residents and visitors to the area. Right now, Central Oregon Fire Management Service plans to bring extra engines and hand crews to the area and pre-stage a Type 3 incident management team. Forest Service law enforcement are working to bring extra safety officers to the area for the eclipse week, and the Forest is thinking about ways to best mitigate fire danger and trash as large volumes of tourists from out of the area arrive for the event.

**Ochoco Summit OHV Trail Project:** The Forest is preparing to issue a final Record of Decision for this project following an Objection Resolution meeting that was held Dec. 13 in Prineville. Implementation of the project is expected to be phased in over a period of years following the Final ROD.

Around 25 objectors to the project attended a four-hour meeting to talk through some suggested resolution points, including Options for phasing in the project; Monitoring; Options for closing Maintenance Level (ML) 1 roads; and Clarifications that can be made in the final decision regarding the analysis conducted.

The Forest released a Final EIS and Draft Record of Decision for this project on September 23. A 45-day objection period followed for those who have previously filed written comments on the proposal. A Supplemental Draft EIS was released this spring with a public comment period that ended April 4. The FEIS incorporates feedback from multiple stakeholder meetings. The FEIS used that feedback to create Alternative 5, which proposes to create a 137-mile OHV trail system with a season of use from June 1 – September 30.

The intent behind the project is to create a sustainable place for recreational OHV use in the Ochocos so that riders will have an authorized place to recreate and will not create their own routes in other parts of the Forest. The Ochoco riding opportunity is intended to dovetail with other riding areas across Central Oregon, like Bend-Ft. Rock, Millican, and Santiam Pass, so that OHV riders have a place to recreate in all seasons. Adoption of an OHV trail system does not eliminate other OHV riding opportunities currently available on open mixed-use roads in the Ochocos.

**East Maury Roadside Danger Tree Removal:** The Forest is preparing to analyze a proposal to harvest fire killed hazard trees along approximately seven miles of Forest Service roads in the Maury Mountains. On Thursday, Sept. 29, a planned prescribed burn in the Maury Mountains became a wildfire when an unforeseen wind event pushed fire across planned containment lines and into adjacent private ranch property. Fire managers were conducting a prescribed burn to improve the resources within a 333-acre unit Thursday afternoon when a storm system moved in from the south and created a 180-degree wind reversal. The storm event pushed fire north of the planned unit and onto 90 acres of adjacent private ranch lands. A quick suppression surrounded the fire at 1,555 acres.



for the greatest good

## **BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)**

**Prineville Airbase Project:** The Forest Service is developing a proposal to lease to-be constructed facilities at the Prineville Airport to support Central Oregon Fire Management Services. A new Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center, currently located at Prineville Airport, is under construction at the Redmond Air Center and expected to be operational by the 2017 fire season. The Forest Service, in partnership with the BLM, is proposing to build new facilities at Prineville Airport for use by firefighters, including the Prineville Hotshots and the Central Oregon Helitack. The Forest expects to develop this proposal and accompanying plans throughout this year.

**Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project:** The Ochoco National Forest, along with the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, is part of the Blue Mountains Forest Resiliency Project. The Ochoco took part in a public engagement session in Prineville last year, which was one of many taking place to discuss the Proposed Action. Across the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon and Washington, more than 2.3 million acres of dry forests have become overcrowded and vulnerable to unusual outbreaks of insects, diseases, and wildfires. The current pace of active forest restoration is not keeping pace with forest growth. The project is an effort to restore more than a half million acres of forests on the Ochoco, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. This project will use thinning and fire to actively restore dry forests toward more resilient conditions.

The Proposed Action suggests:

- 118,000 acres of treatment on the Ochoco National Forest
- 212,000 acres of treatment on the Umatilla National Forest
- 280,000 acres of treatment on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement is planned for release in December this year.

**Big Summit Wild Horse Herd Management Plan:** The Ochoco National Forest is continuing an effort to update its management plan for the Big Summit Wild Horse Territory, a Congressionally-designated area of 27,300 acres located about 25 miles east of Prineville. Planners have begun gathering data in order to prepare an EIS and the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council has formed a public stakeholder group to explore the social values surrounding wild horse management and provide recommendations to the Forest. The current plan was written in 1975 and calls for a managed herd size of 55-60 head. Some of the management tools provided in that plan are no longer available to the Forest and many conditions have changed since 1975. The June 2015 annual wild horse inventory estimated a current herd size of 152 horses. In the interim, the Forest continues to gather animals that have strayed outside the territory and work with the Central Oregon Wild Horse Coalition to adopt them out.

**Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC):** The OFRC has worked collaboratively with the Ochoco to provide recommendations for the Gap Fuels and Vegetation Management Project planning area. A Record of Decision for the Gap project was released last year. The project calls for thinning and restoration treatments on about 38K acres southwest of Big Summit Prairie in the Upper Crooked River and Horse Heaven watersheds of the Paulina Ranger District. The project includes 14K acres of commercial thinning, 2K acres of noncommercial thinning, and 5.5K acres of under burning, along with hardwood restoration, stream restoration and culvert replacements.

**Walton Lake Restoration Project:** The Ochoco National Forest is preparing an environmental analysis for a proposal to thin 178 acres surrounding Walton Lake. The project proposes commercial thinning in order to remove disease-infected fir trees on one side of the lake and to preserve the mature ponderosa pine trees on the other three sides. Laminated root rot has infected Douglas and Grand fir trees on the east side of the lake, rotting them at the base from the inside. The fir trees often fall without warning, which creates a safety hazard at the busiest recreation site on the Forest, and creates a fire danger with the accumulation of heavy ground fuels. On the other three sides of the lake, treatment would remove fir trees that are crowding and stressing the large, legacy ponderosa pines that visitors come to enjoy. Replanting of shrubs, forbs, and disease-resistant trees will follow thinning. The proposal was advertised in 2015 and the analysis was completed using a Categorical Exclusion. A subsequent lawsuit alleged the Categorical Exclusion failed

## **BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)**

to adequately disclose the post-treatment effects of the project, so the Forest is now preparing a more in-depth environmental analysis.

**Crooked River National Grassland Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs):** The Grassland received \$100,000 to refine and enhance its ESDs in partnership with the BLM and NRCS. Our partners are very encouraged and excited to hear that the Forest Service is interested in pursuing further development of ESDs as a tool for describing restoration potential. This effort will help us determine a starting place, and the best places to invest in restoration in the future, to reduce the spread of medusa head and enhance health of native plant communities.

### **What are Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs)?**

Ecological Sites provide a consistent framework for classifying and describing rangeland and forestland soils and vegetation, thereby delineating land units that share similar capabilities to respond to management activities or disturbance.

Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) are reports that provide detailed information about a particular kind of land - a distinctive Ecological Site.

ESDs provide land managers the information needed for evaluating the land as to suitability for various land-uses, capability to respond to different management activities or disturbance processes, and ability to sustain productivity over the long term.

ESD information is presented in four major sections:

- Site Characteristics - physiographic, climate, soil, and water features
- Plant Communities – plant species, vegetation states, and ecological dynamics
- Site Interpretations – management alternatives for the site and its related resources
- Supporting Information – relevant literature, information and data sources

**Human Ecology Mapping survey will help shape Forest Plan Revision:** The National Forests of Central Oregon, in partnership with Discover Your Forest, have released a survey asking people to describe what they value about their public lands. The survey was developed in partnership with Portland State University and the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station. Input received will help shape the upcoming forest plan revision process by providing forest planners data about areas of special concern, management issues important to the public, and trends of use at different locations. The online survey is housed on the Discover Your Forest website at <http://discoveryourforest.org/hemsurvey/>. The Forests are encouraging as wide a participation as possible.

**Ochoco hosts first annual volunteer appreciation night:** The Ochoco/Grassland hosted its first ever volunteer appreciation night in November with the help of nonprofit partner group Discover Your Forest. Around 40 people got together for dinner and drinks to celebrate the many people who volunteer their time on the Ochoco National Forest & the Crooked River National Grassland. Last year's volunteer accomplishments include: 267 Volunteers; 6,409 Volunteer Hours; Equivalent of 3.4 Person years (Full-time employees); and \$142,513 in donated labor.

# Briefing Paper

Pacific Northwest Region – Umatilla National Forest



**Acting Forest Supervisor: Chuck Oliver**  
**John Day Snake RAC – January 26, 2017**

## Blue Mountains Forest Plans: Status and Accomplishments

We're finalizing the Forest Plans for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. These Plans will guide how the Forest Service manages approximately five million acres of public lands in eastern Oregon and southeastern Washington State. In early 2014, we published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and received hundreds of letters during our public comment period. In 2015, we followed up with a series of 24 public listening sessions in communities across the Blue Mountains region. In response to public input, we decided to analyze two new Forest Plan Alternatives in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). We are currently on a path to publish our FEIS, three Revised Forest Plans, and three Records of Decision in 2017.

### 2016 Accomplishments

- **Two new Forest Plan Alternatives:** The Forest Plan Revision Team has developed and is analyzing two new Alternatives in response to formal public comments, listening-session input, and revised recommendations by Forest Service resource specialists. Both Alternatives emphasize forest restoration and seek to move larger portions of the forested landscape toward Desired Conditions.
- **Blue Mountains Aquatic and Riparian Conservation Strategy (Blues ARCS):** To maintain and restore the health of watersheds while supporting multiple uses of NFS lands, such as livestock grazing, the Forest Plan Revision Team adapted the Region 6 ARCS into the Blues ARCS and incorporated it into the Blue Mountains Forest Plans – in collaboration with the USFS Pacific-Northwest Region.
- **Continued public engagement:** The Forest Plan Revision Team delivered on its commitment to “continue the conversation” about the Blue Mountains Forest Plans with a variety of citizens and external stakeholders – even as we have worked internally to finalize the Forest Plans. We have provided updated information through [our website](#), newsletters, conference calls, social media, and in meetings with a host of federal, state, and local government officials. In partnership with Libraries of Eastern Oregon, we also launched an innovative video and social media project called [Voices of the Forest](#), through which diverse citizens shared short videos illustrating why the Blue Mountains are important to them

**For more information contact:** Peter Fargo, Team Public Affairs Officer (541) 523-1231.



**Snowpack Report:** Below are real-time Sno-Tel site readings across the forest for 01/25/2017. These figures represent the snow depth and percentage of average snowpack on this date. They do not represent total accumulations over time as some sites may see more melt off than others.

### OREGON

Emigrant Springs: 23" - 169% of average  
High Ridge: 54" - 114% of average  
Lucky Strike: 25" – 153% of average  
Madison Butte: 21" – 163% of average  
Milk Shakes: 67" - 102%  
Bowman Springs 26" – 149% of average  
Arbuckle Mountain 42" – 114% of average

### WASHINGTON

Spruce Springs: 28" – 92% of average  
Touchet: 56" - 107% of average



for the greatest good



## **BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)**

**Ten Cent Community Wildfire Protection Project** is located within the Granite Creek Watershed, on the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. The fuels reduction project area is identified as a high risk area in the Communities at Risk Assessment in the Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) with numerous residences and the communities of Granite and Greenhorn located adjacent to the two forests. Proposed activities include commercial and non-commercial thinning, prescribed fire and the designation of firewood/post and pole permit areas. We are in the process of finalizing the EIS and drafting the Record of Decision. The FEIS is scheduled to be released soon pending federal register posting. **For more information contact:** Ian Reid, North Fork John Day District Ranger (541) 427-5316. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=45203>

**Umatilla Forest Collaborative Group Projects:** The collaborative group has recently completed work on two projects and are in the initial stages of working with the forest to develop a third project:

- **Kahler Dry Forest Restoration:** This vegetation management project on the Hoppner Ranger District seeks to restore dry upland forest conditions throughout the Kahler Creek watershed through a combination of thinning and prescribed burning. The Final EIS and Record of Decision was signed in June 2016. Strawberry, the first sale, sold on September 27th. The Henry Sale 6.5 MMBF has been advertised and is scheduled to be awarded Feb. 14, 2017. We anticipate awarding Whiskey sale (6 MMBF) in the fall of 2017. The collaborative will follow through with monitoring plans.
  - **Thomas Creek Restoration Project EA:** Located on the Walla Walla Ranger District, this project focused on the restoration of off-site ponderosa pine plantations in cool/moist forest type. Commercial mechanical treatments and non-commercial small-diameter hand thinning are proposed. The Final Decision Notice FONSI was signed in Sept., 2016. Collaborative will follow through with monitoring plans.
  - **Glass Project EA:** Currently working on developing a proposed action with scoping to begin this fall. The project is located on the Walla Walla District about 16 miles north of Elgin, OR in the Little Lookingglass/Upper Lookingglass and Jarboe Creek subwatersheds. It was identified to highlight restoration opportunities in previous harvested, moist forest, and build on the common understanding and lessons learned from the Thomas Creek Project.
- For more information contact:** Jeff Costello, Collaborative Facilitator with Wallowa Resources (541) 426-8053

**Granite Creek Mining Analysis:** The Granite Creek Watershed is located primarily within the administrative boundaries of the Whitman District, Wallowa-Whitman NF and the North Fork John Day District, Umatilla. Project activities will affect about 105 acres of this 94,000-acre watershed. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and draft Record of Decision (ROD) were released in March, 2016. The FEIS was developed through an iterative process with the miners, an IDT team of natural resource specialists, treaty Tribes, and state & federal regulatory agencies. No objections were received and the Final ROD was signed in June, 2016. This is a significant step towards approving 28 mining plans of operations. The majority of operations use a gravity-process utilizing water recycled through settling ponds to collect gold. Reclamation bonds, 401 certifications and valid water rights will be required before the Plans of Operations are approved and mining activities commence.

**For more information, contact:** Jeff Tomac Whitman District Ranger (541) 523-1301 or Ian Reid, North Fork John Day District Ranger (541) 427-5316. Full documents/maps can be found at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=2209>

**Tollgate Vegetation and Fuels Management Update:** The project identified fuels reduction and forest stand density projects within the Tollgate Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) area. The Record of Decision (ROD) for the project was signed in June 2014. Two of four timber sales and one stewardship project have sold and are currently being implemented. The District also expects to implement pre-commercial thinning projects in the future. Public meetings are held each year to update recreational land owners and resident community members on current and projected implementation activities. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=28356>

## BRIEFING PAPER - (continued)

For more information contact: Mike Rassbach, Walla Walla District Ranger, (509) 522-6290



### Grizzly Bear Fire – BAER Work

In mid-August of 2015, a dry lightning storm sparked 22 fire starts within and adjacent to the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness, 20 miles southeast of Dayton, Washington. These fires merged to form the Grizzly Bear Fire Complex. Over the following weeks this fire burned over 82,000 acres on the Pomeroy and Walla Walla Ranger Districts and on adjacent private lands. Roughly two-thirds (55,000 acres) of the Grizzly Bear Fire Complex burned within Wenaha-Tucannon

Wilderness, including portions of the Wenaha Wild and Scenic River.

While many wildfires cause little damage to the land and pose few threats to fish, wildlife and people downstream some fires, like the Grizzly Bear Fire Complex, create situations that require special efforts to prevent further impacts after the fire. BAER (Burned Area Emergency Response) is an emergency program to identify imminent post-wildfire threats to human life and safety, property and critical natural or cultural resources and, when possible, take immediate actions to manage unacceptable risk. The Grizzly Bear BAER Team was funded \$135,000 to address five treatment objectives:

- Reduce threats to personal injury using select roads and trails,
- Warn users of Forest roads and trails of hazards present in the burned area,
- Protect Forest Service investments such as hazard tree removal around historic and recreation facilities.
- Minimize damage to key trails, Mitigate potential post-fire impacts to natural resources downstream, and
- Control expected invasion of noxious weeds.

### 2016 Accomplishments:

- Stabilized and enhanced drainage features on 18 miles of Wilderness trails in severely burned areas to prevent loss of trail infrastructure as well as to decrease potential sedimentation to downstream aquatic habitat.
- Removed the remaining steel beams of the burned Crooked Creek Bridge for public safety. It was anticipated recreationists would attempt to traverse the stringers rather than ford the creek potentially resulting in major injuries or possibly fatalities. We are currently researching bridge design and funding options.
- Completed noxious weed treatment on more than 850 acres (in partnership with Wallowa Resources). Most treatments were completed within the Wilderness area along the Wenaha Wild and Scenic River corridor.
- Completed 2,500 acres of roadside danger tree removal and offered 500 acres of salvage in two timber sales.
- Danger tree and salvage logging provided over 20 MMBF to local mills.
- Produced and installed road and trail safety and fire hazard warning signs on multiple trail systems.
- Performed road and ditch maintenance, replaced a road gate, and conducted storm patrols.
- Conducted BAER treatments in accordance with Wilderness values and techniques with minimal impact to the land.

### Miscellaneous:

- **2017 Temporary Hiring: Region 6** – The Pacific Northwest summer job hiring process is scheduled to take place mid-February in Eugene. The Umatilla is preparing to hire close to 100 temporary positions in rec, fire, customer service, botany-invasive plants, range and timber should temporary hiring move forward.
- **Olive Lake Dam Maintenance and Repair:** Mechanical failure of the water release closure gate closes portion of lake to recreationists. Lake will be drained approx. 27 feet to conduct maintenance operation this fall and next spring. We are working closely with ODF&W to protect the resident fisheries in the lake.  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/umatilla/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD516341>
- **Firewood Season will begin May 1, 2017:** \$5 per cord, minimum \$20 permit, and maximum 12 cords per household per year. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/umatilla/passespermits/?cid=stelprdb5417750>



## Forest Resiliency Project

### Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy

Ochoco, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests

#### Why Here? Why Now?

Across the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon and Washington, more than 2.3 million acres of dry forests have become overcrowded and vulnerable to unusual outbreaks of insects, diseases, and wildfires. The current pace of active forest restoration is not keeping pace with forest growth. Forests have become denser, ladder fuels have increased, and the abundance of fire-tolerant tree species has declined. Climate trends are leading to extended late season drought and longer wildfire seasons – and the forests are losing against these conditions.

The Blue Mountains **Forest Resiliency Project** is the Forest Service’s attempt to address this critical need. This project is a landscape effort to return large portions of the Ochoco, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests to healthier conditions, reduce the risks of unusually large and severe wildfires and reintroduce the natural role of fire to the landscape.

The Blue Mountains Restoration Strategy Team is attempting to accomplish this by moving the dry forests to more resilient landscape forest patterns, while concentrating treatment efforts in the moist forests to minimizing wildfire risk.

#### Where have we been?

The **proposed action** was released on February 5, 2016, for a 60-day scoping period. This proposal includes approximately 610,000 acres of vegetation treatments (logging and thinning) and prescribed fire treatments across the three National Forests in areas with the greatest restoration need, including:

- 118,000 acres of treatment on the Ochoco National Forest
- 212,000 acres of treatment on the Umatilla National Forest
- 280,000 acres of treatment on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

The scoping period resulted in 184 comments. During the scoping period, the Forest Service hosted eight public engagement sessions in communities surrounding the project areas to share information about the proposed action and identify key concerns from the public to consider in project development. More than 170 people participated in these sessions. Additional engagement efforts during scoping included presentations at collaborative meetings, meeting with staff from three Tribes, and meeting with other interested stakeholders.

#### What are we doing now?

The planning team is currently working to better articulate the existing and desired conditions in terms of a resilient landscape. This information will be used to inform a more detailed proposed action. Part of this refinement includes using a Wildfire Risk Assessment to evaluate the risk from wildfire to valuable resources and assets, which will be used to inform treatment design and prioritization.

As the planning team refines the proposed action, the team is also developing alternatives within the proposed treatment areas. The team has identified a third alternative (in addition to the proposed action and the “no action”) that came from issues raised during the scoping process. This third alternative will reduce the areas that would be treated mechanically, focusing on removing proposed treatments in the moist forest. More information on these alternatives will be available as they are further developed.

### **Central Oregon Cascades Wilderness Management Planning with the Willamette National Forest:**

The Deschutes and Willamette NFs are beginning a joint planning effort to consider strategies to deal with resource impacts and maintain wilderness character within the wildernesses they share along the crest of the Cascades in Central Oregon. A joint IDT has been identified and scoping and public workshops are anticipated to begin in mid-Spring of 2017. The joint wildernesses include the Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters, and Diamond Peak. In addition, Waldo Lake Wilderness, which is wholly managed by the Willamette NF, will be included in the analysis.

The goal of the project is to sustain recreational use in these five wildernesses while ensuring future generations can experience the natural and undeveloped qualities of these areas. Actions to reduce impacts are needed to meet the purposes of the Wilderness Act and to meet the direction in the Deschutes and Willamette Forest Plans. Throughout the process, the Forests will engage both local communities and communities of interest to bring the public's energy and ideas into balancing the three important components (environmental, social, and economic) of sustainability while meeting the Forest Service's wilderness commitments. Both the Willamette NF and the Deschutes NF see this project as integral to implementing sustainable recreation on their Forests.

### Actions to be considered:

The Forest Supervisors want to consider a variety of actions including a limited entry permit system, overnight and/or day use limits and fees.

### Timeline

January 2017	Data compiling, analysis, and development of a proposed action
April 2017	Formal scoping
December 2017	Environmental Assessment available for Public Comment
April 2018	Final Environmental Assessment and Draft Decision available for 45-day Objection Period
July 2018	Final Decision
Spring 2019	Implementation

**Joint Chief's Greater La Pine Basin Cohesive Strategy Restoration Project:** In 2016, the Deschutes NF and the Deschutes and High Desert Basin Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) received \$1.2 million in initial funding from the Department of Agriculture through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership to do restoration and hazardous fuel reduction activities on national forest, state, county and private lands in the Greater La Pine area. In 2017, the Deschutes NF and NRCS received an additional \$ 1.78 million for the project.

Spanning approximately 344,000 acres of the Greater La Pine area including portions of both Deschutes and Klamath counties. The effort is being done in partnership with the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State Extension Service, Deschutes and Klamath counties and the Walker Range Fire Patrol District. The project, now in its second year, is expected to last 3 years in total.

**Solar Eclipse 2017:** Along with a variety of partners in Central Oregon and throughout the State of Oregon, the Deschutes NF is preparing for the significant influx of hundreds of thousands of visitors to the area in late August coming to view the total solar eclipse on August 21, 2017.

**Central Oregon Interagency Dispatch Center:** A new Central Oregon Dispatch Center is being built at the Redmond Air Center to replace the current one located in Prineville, OR. The Deschutes NF will lease the building from the City of Redmond through a 20-year lease. The Central Oregon Dispatch Center provides dispatch support and coordination for all risk incidents for the Oregon Department of Forestry, BLM Prineville District, the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and the Crooked River National Grassland. It is expected that the dispatch center will be operational before June 2017.

**Sisters District Office Sale/Conveyance:** In late December 2016 the Deschutes NF chose Compass Commercial Real Estate to act as the Broker to sell approximately 66 acres of the Sisters Ranger District's administrative site. The current office buildings and outbuildings will be included in the sale. A new office will be built on the remaining 13+ acres of the administrative site. The new office building will be built with the funds from the sale.

**Human Ecology Mapping Survey:** The Deschutes and Ochoco NFs and Crooked River Grassland's non-profit partner, Discover Your Forest, are doing an on-line survey to gain input from a broad range of public on what they value about their national forest lands and how they connect to these lands. The survey can be found on Discover Your Forest's website: [www.discoveryourforest.org/survey](http://www.discoveryourforest.org/survey) .

The survey was developed through a partnership with Discover Your Forest, Portland State University, USFS Pacific Northwest Research Station, Forest Service- Pacific Northwest Region, Children's Forest of Central Oregon, and the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland.