

John Day Snake Resource Advisory Council Meeting

February 18, 2021

Meeting convened at 8 a.m. via Zoom

Members present: Chairman Randy Jones, Terry Drever Gee, Greg Jackle, Jim Boethin, Gary Gustafson, Steve Lent, Brian Sykes, Jim Reiss, Bob Krein, Jerry Brummer, Shay White, Ralph "Slim" Stout, Glenn Burleigh and Art Waugh

Agency Reps and others: Shane DeForest, Vale BLM and Designated Federal Official; Larisa Bogardus, Vale BLM RAC coordinator; Alison Dean, Prineville BLM, note taker; Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor; Anthony Botello, WWNF Forest Deputy Forest Supervisor; Lisa Machnik, Deschutes National Forest Deputy Forest Supervisor; Teresa Fraser, WWNF recreation program manager; Dave Plummer, WWNF recreation and engineering; Barry Bushue, OR/WA BLM State Director; Dennis Teitzel, Prineville BLM District Manager; Jeff Kitchens, Prineville BLM Deschutes Field Manager; Amanda Roberts, Prineville BLM Central Oregon Field Manager; Joe Aragon, Vale BLM/Baker Field Office; Joe Neer, Umatilla National Forest Engineer; Lisa Machnik, Deschutes National Forest Deputy Forest Supervisor; Shane Jeffries, Ochoco National Forest Supervisor; Ed Guzman, Malheur National Forest/Prairie City District Ranger; Anne Marie King and Keifer Wells, BLM Ethics Office; Cyndi Bolduc, Oregon State Marine Board; and Peggy Fisher, Deschutes and Ochoco NFs Engineer.

Public: BJ Westlund and Jessica Keys of Sen. Jeff Merkley's office; Kathleen Cathey, Sen. Ron Wyden's office; Marty and Mia Sheppard, Little Creek Outfitters; Richard Coe, Bend Bulletin; Marilynne Keyser, Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area; Susie Koppert, rockhound; Bill Ables, Hells Canyon Recreation Collaborative; Katy Nelson, Oregon Youth Corps Advisory Board.

8:00 Matt: Zoom logistics

8:05 Larisa: Introductions

8:21 Randy: Quorum confirmed by Larisa, welcome to Slim Stout and Shane White new members, welcome to public guests and thanks for participating.

Jerry: Asked to discuss 4700 miles of scenic rivers or add to agenda or for next meeting. Asked to take shorter break.

Larisa: Extended break from 11:30-1:30 is so new members can do ethics training. Seven members terms' expire in July, so vetting new appointments hopefully before October mtg to maintain a quorum.

Randy: Reviewing 2020 meeting minutes, motion to approve. Approved. One correction: 5th paragraph p.2 (Bob is not that old).

Wallowa-Whitman NF Fee Proposal

Teresa's presentation and powerpoint: Proposal to upgrade FS recreation sites in Baker, WW, Union Counties, adding info to docs sent earlier: draft business plan and list of campsites and fees and a powerpoint of more info. Goal for RAC is to take it slow, give lots of info to show purpose and need for more rec sites and get feedback from RAC at next meeting. Showing Ppt Rec Fee Proposal Introduction.

Need a more sustainable developed facility program with revenue to cover maintenance and operating costs and build reserves for deferred maintenance. Continue to Provide quality facilities and services and be competitive with adjacent (state) rec sites. Current fees are the same as in 2005 while operating costs have increased (up 100% for pumping and waste removal).

We have a responsibility to consider public comment. Few comments so far, mostly favorable, but the main negative comment is folks didn't want fees raised because sites aren't clean. (This is what we hope to fix). We are still seeking input from constituent groups and all concerns will be addressed.

Question from audience: How is community communication/outreach? Formal public outreach last fall. Newspapers in local areas including ID, briefing papers to legislators and groups.

Fees have brought in avg \$116,000 per year (last five years, including \$121K in 2020 due to more use) while operating costs are running \$140,000 per year. Proposed New fees would be comparable to fees for adjacent public/state facilities/services. Proposal would allow hiring more summer employees, as well.

Also hope to add more campsites and facilities, simplify fee structure for cabin rentals and group sites but add a fee for extra cars. New fee proposal: \$10 campsites have no water system, \$15 campgrounds have water system. Also add a formal Group Campground, up to 30 people with reservation, \$40 per night. Hope to add more trailheads but no additional TH fees. We want better public satisfaction and safety at our rec sites. (Cleaner, better maintenance and services)

Question from audience: Was 30 comments a normal number following public outreach? Thought we'd get more, but COVID may have impacted that. Tom Montoya: comments seemed representative of our public as a whole, if we had more they would have probably split out the same way.

Comment from audience: Local professional rec folks, taking long view, recognize that FS fees haven't gone up in way too long and maybe need to go up more than this proposal to ensure sustainability with increasing use into the future. But recognize the conundrum that folks don't want to pay more until they see improvements, that can't be done until there's more money coming in.

Terri: Is there a way to set up the fee hike as a progressive ramping up over several years? Yes, it is being considered to do fees stepwise with slower initial rollout.

Art: Not sure we can do a stepwise increase without redoing the whole scoping process? Also what about the difference between two compact cars (paying extra vehicle fee) vs folks with a 5th wheel or tow-trailer that don't pay it? Seems like any private/other rv parks charge for the trailers. Teresa: Yes, we were surprised we didn't see more negative comments about the vehicle fee.

Randy: I move to take the break after the next presenter so we have time to continue Q & A now.

Jackle: This will be new for Blue Mtns rec community, to have to pay for a day hike. This might need a more regional approach from the four forests with larger public outreach instead of just the few TH's in the Blues. Good point – this could incentivize user behavior in ways we didn't anticipate

Shay White: I'm getting negative feedback from people I've talked to. Extra vehicle fee is a no-go ... what is the definition of extra vehicle? Also, have you looked into partnerships with local groups to help with cleaning bathrooms? Is the money going to stay in the state? (ID \$ goes to ID sites even though the

WW is bi-state) Teresa: the vehicle fee is hard to enforce, so may get dropped. Teitzel: fees are tracked by where they're collected and can only be used in the same areas, not transferred.

Randy: With budgets declining across forests, not enough support out of feds to maintain needs. To what extent is this proposal just sufficient for shortfall now, but not sufficient for future anticipated shortfalls? Teresa: yes, we're already behind on that and could have to do the increase proposal again in 5 years. But our public is demanding improvements now without (or before) accepting the kind of fee increases that would take us into the future.

Jim Reiss: Sisters just started trail fees and it would be less confusing to public if FS Trail fees were consistent across the state. \$1 for day use, \$6 overnight/group use. Lisa: But that is for Rec.gov processing charge, it doesn't go back to the forest.

Teresa: Thanks for your time and comments, and these will be considered as we go forward.

9:30 - **BLM-OR State Director Barry Bushue**

Background is mostly private-NGO in the agriculture industry and operating a family farm/nursery in Boring, Oregon.

In Harney county especially and other rec sites, the use has skyrocketed. Some sites destroyed by fire, but even when we rebuild them it will be a while before they are what folks want to see for rec, so the demand for other sites will go even higher. With increased use the cost of O&M goes up and some kind of structured fee increase will have to be part of the future.

Wild horse & burro corrals are full and we have an obligation to take care of those, aware of issues the districts have dealing with rangeland health with all the horses. We need grazing operators to help maintain the allotments.

Malheur Community Empowerment Act – Senator Wyden continues to support and has asked for our comments. BLM is involved and engaged with the whole spectrum of our communities – we in BLM need to be clear about what the different designations under discussion would bring to each part of the community and how people would be affected by each version as we seek public comment before a decision.

Assume that Debbie Haaland will be confirmed as secretary of DOI, and then expect there will be a new chief of BLM. We look for opportunities, not problems.

Wildfire drives what we're doing with O&C lands. not direct impact to RAC on east side, but it affects budget. Fuels reduction is a BLM commitment, as is support of the RFPAs.

Question from audience: How to have input on forest and range health? Bushue: As proposals come forward, keep in touch with your districts and maybe get in on the discussion earlier in the process. We encourage your involvement in these projects. Sage Grouse - so much litigation in ID [audio drop out]

Grazing is everyday business as usual, no fee increase and turnouts on schedule, no big changes anticipated this year.

Randy: Wild horse & Burro is a complicated issue, multi-faceted. Could we play a larger role in education and publicity to avg OR public about the situation? And RFPA's are on call 24/7. Feedback from them is a request for upgrades to their communication systems, especially quality handheld radios.

Art: what are challenges with direction/investment in transitioning fleets to EV? Bushue: nobody believes we'll have EV fire/range rigs in the next 5 years, but we are investigating what it would look like to get there. If the auto industry leads, it will happen.

Marilynn: Can you bring to the BLM an unbiased approach? You seem glib and it's troubling that you're bringing a different and personal perspective to what we've been working on a long time in cooperation with the agencies. Bushue: I don't represent the ag industry anymore. I bring a commitment to the communities and staff, and a passion for professionalism and knowledge and accomplishment within the standards of the agency. As a conservationist and RAC member I take those things as seriously as I do forestry and grazing.

Glenn: Salvage logging after fires needs to happen fast before it rots. I'm all for protecting habitat, but hate to see whole forests of timber go to waste because it takes so long to go through the process. The economic value is lost within 1-2 years. Bushue: Legal obligations are both to maintain yields, and also to protect the forest and honor conservation of habitat. We can't go outside our harvestable land base, by law, and have to do it safely, so a lot of that can't be accessed. Gary: if we can't sell some of the salvage, and keep the money in the communities, how do we pay for the reforestation and stabilization needed after the fire? Bushue: we're sharing staff/expertise from less hard-hit areas to where they're needed to move the process faster. Trying to get more contracts for seeding asap.

Terri: from mining group perspective, what is going on with wild & scenic river designation? Bushue: both senators are looking at conservation and proposing more miles of W&S river. It will be a legislative requirement that my level has no say in, but the senators have to hold public hearings so you can weigh in. Terri: we haven't been notified, not even the counties have been, and it is a burr under the saddle.

Kathleen (Sen. Wyden's rep) The senator reached out with public announcements and letters to county organizations, and we'd be happy to send the letter to your group. We've already heard that the press release isn't clear on what waterways are affected and what designations are considered, how that impacts mining and grazing claims (existing rights are honored). Benefits from the bill would include more push for fire protection, fuels mgmt, more facilities for rec visitation. Central issue is protecting water quality and quantity. We took nominations for the bill, now it's written and now is the opportunity for feedback to make adjustments. That may get more traction than blanket rejection of the whole bill. Terri: my group is interested in helping, but we really want to know what we're asked to help with. Kathleen: I apologize for the communication gap, I am sincerely interested in making sure the bill works for the communities involved.

Randy to Bushue: RAC is composed of folks who are deeply interested in conservation, resource management, and issue resolution more than advocacy.

Bushue: It's important that we have a broad cross-section of perspectives and feedback from our stakeholders informing what we do. With limited resources, we have to maximize the cooperation in making good decisions and plans from the outset. Question about the Malheur Rivers bill

Kathleen: Sen. Wyden will reintroduce the bill, but we are getting lots of input and there are a lot of details that may be adjusted in the final version. Senator's ground rules are that we keep it tight and local and allow for compromise through cooperation, not litigate it in the media.

Greg (ODFW): Solar development on private lands raises issues with wildlife protection rules and mitigation. Any word about solar on fed land? Bushue: the challenge so far is the solar companies prefer to push for private because its faster and easier than dealing with our rules. Only 25% of our land is available for renewable because of exclusions in RMP. Geothermal and pumped storage industry has more interest in using BLM land. We're looking at what we can do – ROW and transmission lines are one way we can be involved. We'd embrace the opportunity for more solar projects, but it would involve NEPA and would have to be initiated by private companies.

Glenn: On solar and habitat/migration issue. Any hope for using the homeless camps around RDM and lease that already-impacted area for solar? Bushue: we do have to make sure any plan is environmentally sound, obligation to protect wildlife etc. Glenn: just looking for win-win opportunities.

Terri: Thanks for taking the time, Barry, to talk with us. I've been on this RAC for 20 years and we have made a big difference by putting our differences aside and coming together to solve issues. We appreciate being involved in this process and connection. Bushue: This is one of the more established and effective RACs, so kudos.

Randy: Maybe in future meetings, invite someone from the NW power authorities to talk about the grid and direction forward? Bushue: no doubt this administration will try to figure out the energy grid.

Terri: BLM was considering managing all mining claims from all fed agencies? Bushue: I don't know about that. Mining remains something we try to manage best we can. Challenge is with state office closed we have been slowed in our online presence.

Art to Kathleen: Senator's rivers proposal – those designations typically create a corridor with hands-off non-mgmt, so I'm glad to hear your intent is to make things healthier and more fire resistant.

BREAK at 10:45

10:55 Update on Lower Deschutes Wild & Scenic River Fee Amendments & Proposals

Jeff Kitchens, presentation and powerpoint: This is an update. About 2 yrs ago we got permission from RAC for a fee amendment and since then we started going forward but we've had to deal with pandemic, so we're still moving forward with public review process. Powerpoint to review history to where we are now. Boater pass system in 2016 transitioned to Rec.gov for permitting. Trends in use vary by segment and time of year, whitewater rafting, camping, fishing, but pattern of use was fairly consistent until 2020 when things were different. Fire seasons can have major impact as well.

River permit fees – BLM and OR parks&rec Dept jointly operate. OPRD gets \$2 of every permit, so BLM only gets remaining \$6 per weekend permit. Annual estimated operating costs: \$730K-760K

(incorporates some river-integrated costs: permittee impacts along the river, monitoring fish populations, etc)

Proposal for a flat fee of \$5/day per person for boater pass. This would be lower on wknd, more on weekdays, and still lower than most other rivers in the west. And there is still a \$6 transaction fee for using rec.gov.

All-user fee: since 2016 working on fine-tuning proposal based on backcountry users other than boaters: Lots of user-groups and stakeholders involved.

2020 happened. Paused the public review process to ensure adequate time for comment period. Closed/limited access on LDR. Everything was different and we didn't want the process to be distracted/affected. Still parsing numbers but in 2020 boater use was down but campground use was sky-high. Cost of maintaining just the bathrooms, even with closures, increased 25%.

Average (5-yr) 135,150 use-days. Avg (5-yr) annual revenue \$495,000. Anticipated change in 2022 with new flat fee would be about \$650,000. Operating cost remember is about \$750,000. There's also deferred maintenance costs. We will still not be fully funded and will rely on other funding sources to help cover costs.

Boater use hasn't increased dramatically, but other uses (hiking, biking, etc) have. Anticipate annually 1700 non-boating users, ~250 overnight users (not including 2020 numbers). All-user fee of \$5/person/night for camping where no vehicle access is present would bring less than \$1000/yr.

Target date is winter/spring 2022 for implementing for new plan and fees, if approved. Before then will be more public notice and comment periods. Starting out it would be an envelope system, not rec.gov. We don't have formal trails out there – the user trails (railroad) cross private land and other jurisdictions. There's other access and uses going on, so we can't limit or change access without lots of negotiation. We don't want to encourage crossing private land with no legal access, so much to consider and sort. Also implementation will require updates to all relevant websites and communication.

How will this affect outfitters/guides? Probably balances out because weekday increase is offset by weekend decrease in fees, but don't know how the outfitters time their trips.

Brian Sykes: Many outfitters will see substantial increase in fees because weekday business is about the same as weekend. Jeff: for commercial operators, they'll see better road/facility maintenance. Fees will still be well below other rivers. But we understand that this will be an impact.

Bob Krein: Will folks at the mouth have to pay a fee for a half-hour hike? Jeff: Not planning to, as it would be hard to manage the day-use hikers. We're focused on folks who hike in to use bathrooms/overnight facilities.

Jim Reiss: We understand that this will impact the church groups and outward bound types who've used campsites on weekdays because of lower fees, but couldn't see trying to apply fees to the half-hour drive-by hikers.

Larisa: After GAOA presentation, can we jump to round-robin topics before lunch? Approved.

Great American Outdoors Act deferred maintenance funds

Peggy Fisher, OCF: Three projects on OCR got funding for 2021: Our 42 Rd across Big Summit Prairie got \$4.1 million to upgrade paving. Walton Lake campground will get deferred maintenance to be done by YCC and Americorps. Land and Water Conservation Fund Project in the Crooked River Gorge, creating the only legal public access in a 20-miles stretch of wild & scenic river (with resource protection for petroglyphs).

Marilynne: we're very excited about this transfer and plan to bring volunteer partnership to help with trail maintenance. Road access on Clubhouse Rd at Crooked River Ranch, near golf course, gate and signage and great trail system with loops, moderate to difficult, 1.5-4.5 miles, with riparian access on canyon floor. It has been underutilized and extraordinary, we're a little nervous about increased visitation, but happy that it will be a legal access.

Shane DeForest, VAD: Nat'l Historic Oregon Trails Interpretive Center – facility will be closed for a while to inventory and protect exhibits/artifacts from damage during construction. We are figuring out how to maintain some facilities open in the area during closure. Also New and upgraded facilities for boater access, road maintenance, seed storage, guard station, IHC quarters.

Lisa Machnik, DEF: Lavalands visitor center/cave complex repaving, fencing repair. Trail bridges for backcountry/wilderness trails. YCC to help with deferred maintenance at rec sites: repairing/painting signs, picnic tables. Steve: what about Cabin Lakes Ranger Station? Lisa: Yes.

[continuing into general updates] Central Cascades Wilderness Forest trail permits through rec.gov, will go live for pre-purchase on 04/06 and require permits after 05/28. Working on public outreach for that. Rx Fire, lots of winter piles, going for burns in the spring but cautious of smoke impacts during COVID.

Buttes to Basin Project, via Joint Chiefs, funding for projects on watershed restoration work and mule-deer winter range, WUI, public-private coop around upper Deschutes.

Huge visitation increase including winter rec, trying to manage impacts and help folks navigate safely. We don't do official monitoring outside of 5-yr count, but interpolating from national numbers the increase during COVID about a 30-50% increase, for about 1 million extra visitors on the DEF last year.

Dennis Teitzel – PRD: Chimney Rock group rec site gets deferred maintenance. Bakeoven quarters/office replacement in Maupin is out for contracting. Sunflower Creek culvert replacement, NEPA is done, final specs for plans and then out for contract with 2022 construction.

Randy: How many staff at Bakeoven? Teitzel: In Quarters, around 6 seasonal staff depending on who gets hired (they pay for quarters, there is no affordable housing elsewhere).

Jim: What about the house at the top of the hill? Teitzel: The Depot house? We use that to keep maintenance stuff, but no current plans for that structure.

Joe Neer, Umatilla NF: Shared stewardship projects: thinning with ODFW, roads/gravel with county public works, Tiger Mill – Mill creek watershed with WallaWalla (after Grizzly fire, to long-term protect the watershed with thinning and defensible space for municipal water supply). WA-DOT heavy equipment trainees provide road work around Pomeroy, [audio lost] something about Heppner.

CFLR – 10-yr project in collaboration with WWF, fire-resiliency work. Blue Mountain Forest Plan Revision

Trail bridges built/replaced with watershed group, multi-agency work. GAOA will pay for road repair, chip-seal, Flood response on several rivers, re-opening access to guard stations, private sections.

Art: Using equipment operator trainees from DOT or even counties is a great way to free up forest resources and get road grading done.

LUNCH BREAK at 12:25

Oregon State Marine Board

Cyndi Bolduc, presentation and powerpoint. Involved with recreational boating, especially registering outfitters and guides. Definition of outfitter/guide: for compensation, provides services for outdoor recreational activities on land or water they do not own or solely control (public land). Almost 1400 O-G's registered currently, mostly fishing guides. Plus federal Special Use Permit Holders if they do stuff like this. Exemptions: owner/trustees, gov depts (universities, etc), Trip support/suppliers (gas, beer)

O-G licence requires: liability insurance, First Aid/CPR, Proof of Compliance (card with exp date, decal on boat; must show proof on request), safety equipment, operator certification for motorboats (decal on boat), coastal endorsement from coast guard (operator card, ocean decal).

Employees must show proof of employer's compliance (copy of card) and proof of employment (roster). Fishing employees must be individually registered as a guide (expensive). One registered guide per boat.

A Charter is a license for a specific motorized boat, 7+ passengers, inspected/licensed by the USCG. Employees don't need FA-CPR, but do need random drug testing.

Reiss: about FA-CPR, what about guides who drop off their charge for the day? Cyndi: Guide is responsible for their charge during term of service, but no stipulation that they are in sight of client at all times. No way to enforce it.

Incident reporting required for all types of guides (water and land). Mandatory 48 hour notification, on-line reporting.

Funding is multi-source. Spending is LE partnerships 43% (swiftwater rescue training, regulatory, special investigations, etc), facilities, admin/education

Federal partnerships – special use permits, non-resident hunt guide tag program, online database for info sharing (with feds only).

Jim: How much can a non-fed look up regarding complaints, legal actions? Cyndi: all you can look up is status – compliance, pending, conditional, expired. Admin action taken against an O-G is published in a newsletter, and aversion to that is a huge incentive. OSMB can revoke, deny, or suspend license up to 5 yrs. Also can fine with civil penalties.

Brian Sykes: I applaud the work of OSMB, raising fees 8-9 years ago and enhancing regulation has made a big difference in raising the bar of professionalism among O-Gs. No longer is it just \$50 and a CPR card to get licensed. What replaced the waterways invasive species permit? Cyndi: Waterway Access Permit in effect since Jan 2020 includes aquatic invasive species permit. Much more expensive, but the fund is used to enhance access and safety training (needed because so many accidents were due to lack of

education on waterway use) as well as grants for anyone helping manage waterways with facilities and educational materials (multi-language info, non-motorized users)

Bob Krein: Who is contact for reporting problems with facilities and managing upgrades? Cyndi: Janean Bolette is facilities project mgr. We don't seek projects, but on request we provide grants and guidance and oversight, engineering help, resources, some funding.

Randy: about proposed new Wild and Scenic Rivers – is OSMB involved in providing interpretive outreach/training/programs? Cyndi: we don't, but Oregon state "Guide-Outfitter R? Program" does provide educational materials for that kind of thing.

Powerpoint will be shared with the group.

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Public Comment and Response

Marty Sheppard: I operate Wolf Creek Outfitters, year-round river guides. Thanks for doing an online mtg, good opportunity for us to participate. Common pool issues on JD River -- we've seen increased demand and overcrowding. Limited launches but unlimited takeouts, creating a bottleneck because folks extended the end of their trips. Unfair factor is unequal internet speed and computer quality, where fastest computer gets access to the limited permits when they go available at 7 am. Number of outfitters has decreased, but public demand for permits is up, and we feel we're being squeezed out. Some groups hoard permits. If a public group decides to get a permit for March 1st and only 2 permits are available, the one group can get both permits. The phase-in has been extended, which suggests there is a problem with the system. The quality of the experience has declined due to higher use and pressure on sites. The goal was to spread out the over-use of two holiday weekends and now it makes the whole summer too busy. Hard to plan ahead – folks want to book a trip and get their plane/hotel tickets, but I can't guarantee the boater pass. I have no flexibility to move people around when I do have the permits. I'm losing sleep over this.

Mia Sheppard - studying the RMP, Page 72-76 in the record of decision, one paragraph states why the common pool was adopted. "One option for adjusting use is" ... [the common pool]. But no other options are listed. In 2000 JohnDay RMP, there were 58 comments, 44 opposed to a common pool and 3 in favor. All these people said this is not going to work. But then this is the only option that accepted. Not fair to the outfitters – it's now a "level playing field", but if the public is getting 80% of permits it isn't fair.

B Sykes: When outfitter holds a SUP, the LMPs give that outfitter an allocation with predictability. But Common pool takes that away. Back in the 90s, fighting this on the Deschutes, there's a segment of the public called the 'outfitted public' who can only enjoy the resource through an outfitter, and they get disenfranchised.

Mia: Most permitted rivers have a 50/50 % allocation. [Teitzel interrupted, and Mia finished her comment in the chat: "It is too much demand, especially the last few year. I do want to point out there was 33 guides in 2000 and now there's only 16 guides and not all of them are active. According to the Review written by Doug Whittaker in 2008 "allocating river use" There was a plan goal to reduce outfitters on the John Day to 26 through attrition/consolidation . I think they have achieved that."]

Teitzel: last year the use was unprecedented. Even with permit system, there was more use/permits than normal. A lot of folks stayed long on their permits because in 2020 there was no other activities/work to go do – that hopefully will change after COVID. We're trying to get more land along river and open more camp sites to spread out the visitors, and also be able to offer more permits. We also added a full-time LEO (used to be half-time), but we didn't find people out there w/out permits.

Do we go back to an allocation? It's a limitation, can't go higher than that, but guarantees availability and cap. Without it, client-based, allows expansion of your business. So it's about finding the right balance. Unfortunately, it's hard and takes a long time to change a plan, so once we try to change the NEPA there are new winners and losers.

Mia: Right now it's not about expanding, it's about saving our business. Right now we can't survive with the common pool. Read the comments again, there's more than just opinion, there's substance. I would like to see the "OTHER OPTION" that is not mentioned in the plan.

Jim Reiss: maybe making the permits have a hard stop like on the Deschutes, folks have a put-in and take out date, with no extended stays stacking up at campsites.

Randy: I encourage folks to talk to Amanda Roberts, she's a good thinker on this stuff.

Mia: We have talked with her.

Randy: Thanks, Mia and Marty for your comments.

Susie Koppert: I'm a public-advisory-council person for rock&mineral societies across the west. I appeal to the RAC or BLM for help. During COVID we've had a huge increase in membership, especially families with kids who want to start collecting rocks. Can you help me provide public outreach to educate for interpretation, responsible use, avoiding damage? I could use the guidance/help.

Teitzel: Thanks, we appreciate your efforts. We got great comments about your efforts at Hampton Butte public lands day. Please get with Amanda Roberts and Kevin Weldon – they'll be happy to help and they've been doing outreach in the schools. FYI the rockhounding guidelines will be part of an upcoming LMP revision.

Larisa: Anna Stafford is active in rockhound groups in Baker City 541-643-5012.

BREAK at 2:45

Steve: In future, maybe have a time limit for public comments so one commenter doesn't take up the whole time? Randy: Yes, I took a note on that.

Agency Updates

Anthony Botello WW NF: from our briefing paper, here's the highlights. We submitted a lot of projects for GAOA funding but got only one (because criteria changed). Something in the Eagle Caps (missed it). Blues Intergovernmental Council is helping us with FMP revision (with UMF and MAF). Hell's canyon rec area – improvement on Pittsburgh landing on the ID side, popular access point so needed upgrades include the water system – funding through partnerships. Engineering found bridge issues, unsafe so temp closure in place, and those will be replaced. Hells canyon NRA is producing a travel-use map and

site-specific travel mgmt. CFLRP, joint with UMF and WWF, thinning and veg treatment shelf-projects for fire protection – 10-year planning horizon if congress funds it

Randy: What are time frames? BIC is working up desired conditions for FMP revision, potential draft EIS within a year, but that may be ambitious.

Glen: With removal of east side screens amendment, so possible removal of trees > 21"? After extensive review and modified to change rules to guidelines so we can now harvest larger trees on site-specific basis.

Shane Jeffries: All 6 forests are in the same boat. But the amendment doesn't authorize anything on the ground, it just says we can consider modifying the standard in NEPA for individual projects without redoing the entire EIS.

Shay White: We support for Pittsburgh landing project, thanks for doing good work there and for securing the collaborative partnership funding.

Glenn: Replaced the Hell's creek dock? Shay: Yes, OSMB was gracious in that. Ramp has been fixed. Glen – used to be a lone jet-boat service monopolized that ramp? Shay: that was by agreement with the USFS, but the company is trying not to use the whole dock now.

Art: OHV question [audio lost]. Anthony: In Hells canyon travel map/plan, yes, the existing OHV plan is carried forward. but still inventorying and working on an OHV plan for elsewhere.

Shane DeForest, VAD: Mining – ops plans in the works, with riparian and road plans. ID power wants to treat vegetation in their ROW. Mobile cellular companies working on com sites. Dingle act – working on public-suggested parcels to improve access. Range: renewals in progress. Weeds program working with county cooperators on equipment sharing. Forestry – salvage and forest health projects. S Fork WallaWalla floods and road work. Wildlife: Sage Grouse front and center, Baker PAC is struggling, trying to figure out how to help that population rebound. We had a couple big fires, ESR work in progress: sage and bitterbrush seedlings planted, some drill seeding. Targeted grazing to reduce fuels for fire risk.

Ed Guzman, MAF: Getting NEPA through on large veg projects, optimistic on timber targets. CFLRP funds were awarded and getting used for fuels reduction, fencing. RMEF and other partners going strong with helping us reach goals. Interested buyer for lumber mill in Prairie City, closed since 2008; will have 60 employees as mill and cogen plant. Working on amendments to our projects after 21" rule change.

Lisa Machnik: covered it all before lunch. I spoke with Alex Enna about monitoring and metrics for the joint chiefs project. Working out objectives that are practical and understandable to send up for review.

Randy: I looked at photos of Rosland Fire and it was a stark contrast of treated vs untreated stand effects. Monitoring and showing that is important.

Shane Jeffries, OCF: Peg covered our GAOA stuff earlier. Nat'l Asset Mgmt Programs are other funding sources. We'll get an interagency fire center at Lamonta station – it will serve about 100 FFs of the east half of COFMS, Rivers and Prairie divisions. Rx Fire: 7000 acres done last fall and some spring work coming. With COVID, smoke concern is heightened around communities.

Randy: Does FS benefit if there is a nat'l infrastructure bill – like federal highways? Shane: I speculate yes, if history is a guide, but no info yet.

Shane: Frog fire road safety hazard tree salvage, about 15 miles along roads, work ongoing. Wild horse plan for our Big Summit herd released our draft, haven't resolved objections yet. (NotMurderers Creek Herd working closely with MAF) Walton Lake root rot, about 35 acre epicenter near campground so we need to remove those and do custodial thinning, safety is issue, but very contentious with public and litigated. Landscape restoration project in litigation but timber sales are beginning. Deconfliction on trail proposals via partners and work is planned. Allotments as normal. State of OR is overseeing NEPA on the Bellweather project, kind of novel approach.

Glenn: re eastside screens, are you still doing public input? Decision is made and we can implement now. Looking at a stakeholder group for the 6 forests to help us go forward. Glen: could I be one of those stakeholders? Get in touch with Emily Platt to get more info. (I missed some of this due to audio interference).

Steve: What's status and future of CCC buildings at Big Summit RS? Shane: Master facility plan revision in progress now. Considering interpretation or other use. I've asked them to get in touch with you as local historian.

Round Table

Jerry: My term is up in July, how do I re-up? Larisa: You signed up last Feb in Baker City. It is in the hopper while new vetting process is developed.

Art: We'll have about 9 people on a dig near Terri soon.

Terri: Happy with the cooperation and partnerships working to get funding. Could you send me a copy of the info Kathleen is going to send about the rivers bill, please? We have some miffed folks who feel they don't know what's going on.

Bob Krein: I'm not excited about virtual meetings, looking forward to in-person.

Brian Sykes: Is there currently just one vacancy on the RAC? Larisa: Several names in the hopper with Marilynne at the top of the list. Next subcommittee mtg May 19 evening via Zoom.

Glenn: I attempted to get a tour of the torrifaction plant in John Day, but they've had issues with welding flaws and had to find a contractor who could do confined-space welding. That could be a cool field trip for the group when they're up and running. Also, we lost the Boise-Cascade fir plywood mill in Elgin, but the gilchrist mill got sold and re-opened. If we lose the pine mills nearby, we won't find another market with prices so low. Randy: Elgin mill did not go down. By all accounts they've stayed open. Glenn: good to hear. Still, we're getting thin on mills and price for logs is down, Even though there is increased demand for lumber with housing market. (Larisa looked it up and says Elgin is up in the air still.)

Jackle: Worked with OCF on trails and good neighbor, PRD sage grouse ... [audio lost, missed part of this] ... more turkey hunters on the landscape due to COVID.

Jim Boethin: In John Day - lots of confusion about the rivers bill, why do we need even more protections? Interest in the 21" tree rule change. We have had lots of wolf sightings reported.

Jim Reiss: heard about a 75" intake on the Columbia river for an irrigation system – anyone know about that?

Shay White: [Audio feedback, missed part of this] Sturgeon fishing season issues, notice that fishing is closed due to spawning... but at the wrong time of year?

Brian Sykes: Gave my 2 cents already.

Slim: Nothing to talk about, but wondering ... used to hear that recreation may be a higher revenue source than timber and public lands could make more money selling rec opportunity than timber sales. Curious if rec \$ has filled the gap in funding that timber used to cover, for roads etc.

Randy: Thanks Shay and Slim for joining the RAC. USFS publishes annually the aggregate spending on rec and wildlife activities on public lands. Since 1994 I've been seeing this. Wildlife viewing outspends the other categories by more than twice. And its not consumptive. Dollars spent on lodging, travel, food, beer. And COVID-related escapism and a place to be safe. Do we expect to see that continue? I do, because folks are rattled and it will be a while before folks want to go to airports for escape.

OR legislature lottery dollars slated for dam (to raise the lake by 4 feet) got pulled during COVIC session, but the \$ got put back recently. For irrigation and ag production in the Wallowa valley. Change in flows, 100K acre-feet that could otherwise go to a lot of downstream uses. One consequence of raising the lake is compromised septic drain fields.

Steve: Rec vs timber. Timber provided income to fund a lot of projects in the FS and local gov, which rec income to community doesn't do.

Randy: Regarding water intake on Columbia in Morrow & Umatilla counties – NE water association in support of agriculture, big business. The water rights from a couple cities were gifted to instream, to balance the withdrawal (in allocation terms) so the trick is timing the winter instream flow balanced with storage available for summer irrigation. Lots of economic drivers in water: ag, forest industries. The water is finite. Protected watersheds, municipal drinking water comes from NFs. Watch the balance and economics of the dam&irrigation industry, wild&scenic values, placer mining (gold prices increasing). Choices to be made, water is a resource to be managed. Next goal is to convince OWEB to grant \$ for students to do macroinvertebrate surveys to track water quality [across the Cottonwood Creek watershed?]. Getting education to people early changes their participation later.

Terri asked, Randy answered: The \$14 million for the dam raise is back in the gov's budget, up for approval by state legislature.

Dennis Teitzel [was out when it was his turn earlier, so] PRD update: 997,000 visitors on PRD in 2020, 25% increase over prior years, attributed to COVID but they'll keep coming now they've seen it. Fuels reduction across the district, cultural clearance is an issue but we just hired another archaeologist and looking for one more (instead of paying a contractor, and more flexibility). Most of our fuels \$ is tied to sage grouse and habitat, but we're trying to do WUI in Lapine and Crooked River Ranch with Dingle Act. Timber EA going out for public comment. Trespass resolution on house built on BLM near Post, will be resolved finally (house burned down and we had to redo the EA). Finished 30-mile rec site acquisition. Amanda Roberts is engaged with upper John Day group for other acquisitions along the river/uplands for public access and habitat.

Steve: Teaters Rd update? No change in status.

Glen: Cultural surveys where there's no ground disturbance - what's the need? Sage steppe has lots of sites, cutting and lopping is not an impact, but we have to avoid piling and pile burning on top of a site.

Randy: Thanks to Shane DeForest as designated federal officer on quorum. Shane: this is the most engaged RAC I've participated in and compliments on the level of preparation from members.

Larisa: May subcommittee agenda: WW fee proposal. Meeting time is 6:30 pm. June meeting on Friday June 25th for general business. June 24th is joint RAC meeting and field trip. Other future agenda items discussed: solar power, e-bikes, mule deer, pronghorn, torrefaction.