

John Day-Snake
Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting
 Bureau of Land Management (BLM)/Forest Service (FS)
 Oxford Suites
 Pendleton, Oregon
 April 22, 2004

Facilitator: Debbie Lyons

Notetaker: Peggy Diegan

RAC Members	Group	Federal Officials
Steve Courtney	1	Dave Henderson, DFO, Vale BLM
Art Waugh	1	Tina Welch, Prineville BLM
Terry Drever-Gee	1	Jeff Blackwood, Umatilla NF
Joseph Jones	2	Penny Dunn-Woods, BLM-Baker City RA
Shirley Muse	2	Dick Markley, Wallowa Whitman NF
David Riley	2	
Berta Youtie	2	Guests
Michael Hayward	3	<i>Matt Kneisel</i>
Timothy Stearns*	3	<i>Dave Schmitt-Blue Mt</i>
John Tanaka	3	<i>Todd Forbes -Lakeview</i>
		<i>Larry Barte Field Rep for Senator Gordon Smith</i>
Absent Members		Absent Federal Officials
<i>Robert Brunoe</i>	3	Larry Timchak, Ochoco NF
<i>Adriane Borgias</i>	1	<i>Roger Williams, Malheur NF</i>
<i>Tim Keith</i>	3	
*Tim Stearns had to leave the meeting early due to family emergency; therefore, meeting was lacking a quorum.		

AGENDA REVIEW

Debbie Lyons-Facilitator/Public Affairs Vale BLM /John Tanaka-RAC Chair

INTRODUCTIONS

- Self introductions

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

Debbie Lyons

- No quorum, could not approve the last meetings minutes.
 - Debbie to call a member to complete the quorum to approve the minutes with the change on page 6 of the word flavored for favored.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

OHV-Chair is Adriane Borgias with members Shirley Muse, Tim Stearns, and Art Waugh.

- There has not been a meeting since the last RAC meeting.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

Chair is John Tanaka with members Berta Youtie, Shirley Muse, and Terry Drever-Gee.

- **Berta Youtie** reported on Medusahead.
 - Mid June the Invasive Plant Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) document is scheduled to be out.
 - RAC would like to have time to comment on the draft document.
 - **Dave Henderson**-we have the option of calling a conference call if necessary to review the draft and meet the deadline.
 - **Jeff Blackwood** will check on the dates of the comment period.
 - RAC's support of the EIS is important.
 - Jeff can have some key members come to the June RAC meeting in Baker City.
 - With the big EIS's, it is helpful to have a short course on what are the key elements, etc.
 - May want to include the Southeast OR RAC and the Eastern WA RAC.
 - The three mountain Forests are looking at their role in this.
 - Forests are looking at protocol to make a decision on what kind of NEPA is needed
- Agriculture research and others have gotten together to make a priority list on what research is needed with the Medusahead problem.
 - Medusahead is the greatest threat in the Inter Mountain West.
- **Dave Henderson**- the national EIS is going to focus on weeds.
 - This draft will be available in fiscal year 2005.
 - At one time the bureau was considering funding the Wild Horse and Burro program dollars by using weed program dollars.
 - Congressmen have gotten the word that their constituents do not want these dollars taken out of the weed program.
- Noxious weeds encroachment affects habitat for sage grouse, wild horses, range, etc.

Suggestion from Terry Drever-Gee on funding weed control projects: Grant County has dollars available in Title II. Just need to submit a project to get these dollars.

PLANNING SUBGROUP

Chair is Terry Drever-Gee

- Assignment is the Forest Plan Revision.
 - Coordinating with Dave Schmitt in Baker City.
 - One meeting has already been held in LaGrande, another is scheduled for the 29th.

SAGE GROUSE

Chair is Berta Youtie with members John Tanaka, and Joseph Jones.

- Questions needing answered: should sage grouse be listed, does some other species needs listed first, or should it be listed at all.
- What works in Vale and Burns may not work in Prineville.
- Hoping for some flexibility.
- What has come out of some of the studies is that the Prineville District sage grouse are not doing well, however Vale and Burns Districts they are doing ok.
 - Prineville area most of the habitat for sage grouse is private land and the numbers are going down.
 - Good strong holds on the Vale District with large numbers.
- Next stage is to hold public meetings in the areas.
- Aggressive schedule: first draft in June, a final draft in August or September.
 - They are working towards is common terminology and one map of area.

HEALTHY FOREST RESTORATION ACT

Jeff Blackwood-handout project list.

- There is a lot of emphasis on keeping fire safe communities by using the Blue Mountain Integrated Fuels Program to keep forests healthy.
 - FS has gone through effort to identify communities at risk and most of eastern Oregon has communities at risk.
 - The emphasis is to keep the plans simple and clean and to identify the issues.
 - Each community is different in how this is done.
 - Need to be sure the smaller communities are addressed.
 - There are some grants out there to help communities with their plans.
 - Instead of individual communities doing their own plans there are some county umbrella plans.
- Title III dollars are used to write the fire plans and title II dollars to implement the plans.
- Looking at developing service contracts that mulch or remove the bio mass and allows the FS to utilizes the receipts for the next fuel treatment.
 - Fascinating technology for portable bio mass units to go to the field and store energy to use elsewhere.
- At the June RAC meeting there will be a field trip to look at the Frazier project on the Baker Resource Area.
- During President Bush's Medford District visit, BLM was able to show him the benefit of controlled burns.
 - The fire got to the spot where the BLM had had controlled burns prior to the wildfire and the fire lowered to the ground across the controlled burned area and when it got to the other side it went up into the trees again and took off.
- **Dick Markley**-All the forests are putting together a 5-year plan and the directions are to include the local communities.

- FS priorities are wildland fire interface first then looking at watersheds, habitat, etc.
- Need to recognize the risk of wildfires before we get the plans completed.
- If the RAC feels strong on an issue it helps the BLM/FS to get a letter expressing their feelings.

BLUE MOUNTAIN FOREST PLANNING UPDATE-see handouts

Dave Schmitt

- Newsletter will be coming out this week or next.
- What is the priority?
 - Trying to bring the four forest plans (Malheur, Ochoco, Umatilla, and Wallowa Whitman) together.
 - Working on desired conditions in five categories
 - Drafting the Current Management Situation (CMS) now instead of Analysis Management Situation (AMS).
 - Moving either towards or away from the desired conditions.
 - Starting with the current forest plan and if it is working, leave as is, if not make some changes.
 - Working with the criteria and indicators.
 - Look at, are we having sustainable eco systems.
 - Look at character you should have.
 - Focus on sustainability.
 - More descriptive and less prescriptive
 - Less telling how to do instead show the end result.
 - Calling in a neutral facilitator from the outside to help facilitate the meetings
 - Focus is to facilitate conflict that arises around the planning meetings.
 - Need broad base support to get the job done.
 - Developing collaborative strategy and finalizing with all the players.
 - Determining what is the objective of the meeting and who should be at the meetings.
 - They have not started the NEPA process yet and they are not bound by the NEPA rules.
 - Can get with the public and develop each project as they go along.
 - Trying to develop a vision for the Blue Mountain Forests.
 - Intend to take the Blue Mountains and separate out in geographic areas.
 - What are some logical subgroups for the Blues?
- FS is going to involve the RAC as much as they want to be involved to meet their deadlines.
 - Collaboration will be stressed with-working together.
- Inviting the RAC to participate in these meetings.
 - Hoping the RAC folks bring to the table what their interest groups want to happen.
 - Meeting with co-conveners on April 29 at 9:30 in LaGrande to get all opinions out there.

- NEPA is going to be started in 2005.
- The idea of bringing everyone to the table is critical so there is not a wreck later on.
- Broad base support will help us be legally supportable.
 - Broad base support comes from groups such as this RAC.
- Since they do not have to do the NEPA process or EIS it allows more time to work with the publics on collaboration.
- **John Tanaka**-on who should represent the RAC.
 - It is RAC business and there needs to be a proposed budget so it can be planned ahead of time.
- **Dave Schmitt**-four sets of meetings in LaGrande, they meet from 9:30 to 4:00.
 - Person just needs to be a contact and who attends the meeting does not need to be the same one each time.
 - Liaison may be a better word than representative.
 - Need a letter from the RAC on what they support.
 - There are two different functions of the RAC, the networking function then there is the regulations and decisions.
- The RAC as a body can advise the Secretary on the Blue Mountain Plan.
 - The other duty is to come back as a subgroup and bring this information back to the planning group with a recommendation from the RAC.

FOREST SERVICE APPEALS

- **Bill Supulski Planning Staff, Malheur National Forest, 541-575-3140, bsupulski@fs.fed.us**
- 36 CFR is direct to the Forest Service and changes how they will do NEPA and Appeals
- 67 questions that the “Appeal Reviewing Officer” independent reviewer has to answer on the original decision.
 - Peer review process.
 - They make a recommendation to the Regional Forester, it is not binding.
- Change last year no longer is a Categorical Exclusion (CEs/CXs) appealable.
 - All new Categorical Exclusions from the Healthy Forest Act.
 - New line put in “Substantial loss of economic value to the Federal Government” this is not defined.
- Two weeks ago Roger Williams approved the Flagtail Project, this is the first project to use the “Substantial loss of economic value to the Federal Government” in the country.
 - Two days after signing, this project was hit with an appeal and a lawsuit.
 - Going to court tomorrow on this.
 - Temp restraining order.
 - Yesterday, Roger Williams approved the second project to use the “Substantial loss of economic value to the Federal Government” in the country.
- Emergency Situations only can use the “Substantial loss of economic value to the Federal Government”.

- This then allows us to be sued immediately.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD-no public showed up

PYGMY RABBITS

Todd Forbes

- This is the smallest of the North American rabbits, with an average weight of one pound.
- They dig their own burrows.
- 5-7 young per year.
- Less reproductive of the other wild species in OR.
- They eat sage brush and use it for cover
- Habitat selected for cover is the tallest and densest sage brush plus good soil that will maintain the burrow structure.
- Distribution is OR, ID, Nevada and Utah-current known, some in Wyoming, Washington, Montana, and California.
- This is a watched species by BLM
- Low priority on listing, but he thinks that this will go as the sage grouse does.
- Have also defined what is and what is not suitable habitat.
- Pygmy rabbits prefer the low-to-the-ground growing sage brush with good soils underneath.
- Rabbits eat a lot of grasses in summer, Forbes in the spring.
- Other plants are utilized, but not much research has been done on this.
- Have tagged 120 animals so far.
- Vandalism is real low on surveillance cameras.
- Lost one camera out of several years of using the 20 cameras for a 4 month period of time in the summer.

WHAT WILL THE MEETINGS LOOK LIKE?

Debbie Lyons

Process

- Field Trips-a couple times per year-weather permitting
- Subcommittee updates
- Round table
- Critique
- Social Activity
 - Restaurant reservations.

Specific Content

- Subcommittee Updates
 - Off Highway Vehicle (OHV)
 - Noxious Weeds
 - Planning
 - Sage Grouse

Important Issues

- OHV
 - FS National Policy

- Sub Basin Planning
- Noxious Weeds
 - FS Region 6 EIS
 - BLM Vegetation Management
- Forest Plan
 - Revisions-Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI)
- Sage Grouse Strategy
- Subasin Planning (June)
- Fuels Management and current science
 - FS is hosting a meeting in Redmond to see if the ground application of vegetation work and presentations by a number of scientists.
 - There may be some applications that the RAC can be involved in
- Wild horse and burro with specific things that the RAC wants info on.
- Umatilla Forest Native Plant restoration program.
- Grazing Regulations
- Field trip June 23, meeting June 22 in Baker City.

Recruitment

- Struggling in finding new members
- Grazing representative needed-important
- Flexibility needed such as, changing Wild Horse and Burro to a Fish and Wildlife position.
- If you know of anyone please recruit.

MAY 11-13, 2004 RAC CHAIR MEETING in Phoenix

John Tanaka

- How to get the RACs involved early.
- Briefing on OHV.

Assignment: Send John an e-mail if you have something that you want him to bring up at the May RAC Chair meeting in Phoenix.

- Elaine Brong made it known that the RAC's are important.
- She advised her deputies that they will get to at least one RAC meeting a year.

ROUNDTABLE

Shirley Muse

- When the RAC was involved with the ICBEMP the environmental community was not happy because the RAC got inside information and they wondered why this happens.
 - The environmental community did not think that the RACs were going to be as important as they have become.
 - The bosses of BLM and FS think that the RAC's are very important.

Penny Woods

- BRA has the privilege of sponsoring the annual OR/WA Leadership Forum May 11-13 and these folks will be staying in Clarkston for the meeting to look at the Grande Ronde River.

- First chance for the group to see the Grande Ronde River.

Tina Welch-the steering committee chair.

- Stewardship program is trading timber for Healthy Forest Initiative work.
- There are a couple of small sites, Cove and Frazier Mountain.
 - There will be a field trip next month.
- Prineville is doing controlled burning and have met this year's targets.

Dick Markley

- 17,000 acres of fuels reduction is scheduled this year on the Malheur National Forest.
- In position to do more work because the NEPA has been completed.

Steven Courtney

- Had hoped to hear from Roger Williams on the Grazing lawsuits, and on the wild horses that need to be collected.

Dave Henderson

- Need to look at these issues at the September meeting.

Berta Youtie

- May look at the horse issue at the September meeting in John Day
- Would like to thank Matt Kneisel for coming, he is interested in the RAC position of Wild Horse & Burro/Wildlife and wanted to see what the meetings are like by attending this one.

Matt Kneisel

- He does private consulting on wildlife and has worked for Idaho Fish and Game.
- He still does Environmental Assessments (EA's) but likes field work more.
- Appreciates being here, sees the same issues with more collaboration.

John Tanaka

- Rangelandswest.org (click on state) is the website that addresses lots of rangelands issues.
 - 19 states are collaborating and this is a website that has lots of rangeland issues with lots of links.

Art Waugh

- Very interesting the FS four part plan touched on this AM.

David Riley

- Interested in the grazing permit information EIS when it is open.
 - Would like to do a comparison on what it was and what it now is.

Joseph Jones

- Archeology both BLM and FS is doing a good job of protecting Native American sites.
- Public involvement is going good.

- Historic perspective, it is important to make the burnable sites well photographed in case they burn

Jeff Blackwood

- As a settlement to the Northwest Plan lawsuit, which includes species that we do not know a lot about, there are hundreds of species that include mosses, lichens, etc.
- The system was choking resources and as part of settlement in a lawsuit an EIS that abandons this and moves the species of concern that we pay particular attention to so they do not go on the endangered species act.
 - Biological evaluation is done on a species prior to a project
- The species were put on the sensitive species list so now we have more species to be careful of
- Challenge is with the suspected species that very little is known about them.
 - Includes 4 snails, lichens, and mosses, etc.
- Expectation is that we would need to evaluate the species before doing a management decision.
- What are these species and what is the life history of these species.

Dave Henderson

- Thanks for coming and working so hard

REVIEWED ASSIGNMENTS

John Tanaka

- Co-convener-Terry Drever-Gee will go to the Blue Mountain Forest Plan meeting, and then send (e-mail) information gleaned from the meeting out to the RAC.
 - At the meeting it will be decided what it means to be a co-convener.
 - Terry needs to send a budget request to Dave Henderson for travel dollars needed to attend these meetings.
 - Good way to get RAC comments into this plan
 - After Terry attends the meeting the RAC will need to determine if there needs to be a Workgroup formed, either internal or external.
- Takes a commitment from the FS to include RAC participation.
- John Day River Plan received RAC feed back and it was well received.
- **Jeff Blackwood**-Prime functions of the RAC is to give advise to the BLM/FS and the primary need is the input from the RAC.
 - Reminder that input that came from the RAC did make a difference with ICBEMP.
 - Keep this in mind and after Terry attends the Co-convener's meeting the RAC will have a better feel on how this works.
- **Dave Henderson**-Reminder that a Federal Register notice (15 days minimum posted in the Register) will have to be done, and it will need to be added to the timeframe of setting up a meeting/conference call.
- If the RAC determines after Terry Drever-Gee's report on the co-convener's meeting that it is not a good avenue for the RAC to go, we may need to bring Dave Schmitt back.

CRITIQUE

Dave Henderson

- Is there anything the RAC wants changed or improved in the way these meetings are being conducted?
 - Group present did not have any complaints or comments

MEETING ADJOURNED