

Final 3-16-99

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for the

Grants Pass Active Club
Amendment of Special use Recreation Permit number MRP-251
to include a Jet Boat River Race
Classes A through C and Unlimited

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

MARCH 1999

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT

EA COVER SHEET

RESOURCE AREA: Grants Pass

FY & REPORT # EA Number OR-110-99-03

ACTION/TITLE: Grants Pass Active Club

LOCATION: Rogue River between Grants Pass and Almeda Park

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NOTICE

"Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the above address during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the EA, or other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety."

GRANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

Boatnik permit amendment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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Chapter 1

Purpose and Need for Action and Alternatives

A. Introduction and Need for the Proposal

1. Introduction

The purpose of this environmental assessment (EA) is to assist in the decision-making process by assessing the environmental and human effects resulting from implementing the proposed project and/or alternatives. The EA also helps in determining if an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This Proposal is consistent with the objectives of: (1) the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) dated June 1995 for the Medford District Resource Management Plan dated October 1994 (p.6 & 63); and (2) the Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated February 1994; and (3) the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its Attachment A entitled the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated April 13, 1994; and (4) the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River revised development and management plan, dated July 7, 1972; and (5) the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River Activity Plan for the Hellgate Recreation Section dated November 9, 1978. and (6) Management Guidelines and Standards for National Wild and Scenic Rivers. (USDI, 1989).

2. Need for the Proposal

The Grants Pass Active Club has requested that their Special Use Permit for the Boatnik Hydroplane Race is amended to allow for a jet boat event from Grants Pass to Almeda bar. Their existing permit allows for a hydroplane race on Memorial Day from Grants Pass to Robertson Bridge, a distance of thirteen miles. The length of the added race is a total, one way distance, of 28 miles

This type of event would provide a rare recreational experience for people of the region. This is an international event with boats and drivers coming from all over the world.

B. Scoping Issues Relevant to the Proposal

If approved, this will be the third year for this event. Responses to initial scoping, the previous EA, subsequent scoping letters and other requests for comments have generated a number of issues. These issues are listed below with findings from the two previous events.

1. Safety/Hazardous Materials

Safety is one of the most frequently raised issues for this proposal and consequently it has received a great deal of attention. Listed below are the most frequently mentioned safety concerns.

The need to ensure that there are no other boats or people on the event course during the event. Grounding or capsizing of a participating boat or the collision of a participating boat with another craft or person. There is a possibility that a boat could wreck or capsize and the driver, passenger, or a spectator could be injured. Potential that a boat wreck could result in a fire and ignite stream side vegetation. There is a potential that fuels or other hazardous materials could be released from the craft because of an accident or during refueling operations.

FINDING: The safety record of the first two events showed that the County Sheriff's safety plan worked. All reasonable measures were and will be taken to protect life and property. There were no injuries and only one incident. The boats are built with careful attention to design requirements that all but eliminate the chance of a fire or the spilling of hazardous material.

During the 1997 event a boat sank near Galice, after hitting a rock. No one was injured in that accident and the boat was recovered by helicopter, intact and without incident. There was no evidence of hazardous materials entering the river. (See implementation features of the proposed action)

2. Soil Erosion

Soil erosion can be caused by the action of the boat wake on unprotected steep alluvial banks. See Rogue River Erosion/Deposition Study (Klingeman, Cordes, Nam 1993).

FINDING: Observations of the 1997 and 1998 events revealed that the types of boats participating throw a minuscule wake with very little energy. Any impact to erosive soils would be unmeasurable.

3. Fisheries (Threatened or endangered species)

The effects to fish have been raised, however the event will take place outside of chinook spawning season so disturbance of redds is not an issue. Disturbance to adult and juvenile fish is of minimal concern.

4. Wildlife (Threatened or endangered species)

There are many species of wildlife in the event area that could be temporarily displaced by the noise and activity. Of particular concern are Great Blue Heron rookeries, which are located near the river in three locations along the event route. There are 20+ Osprey nests in this river segment.

FINDING: Herons were observed to stand on a side channel and fish as the boats passed. Sometimes they would fly off as the boats passed, sometimes they would not. If they flew, they would return in a short while. It appears that they were not as disturbed as when passed by a float craft. Osprey were observed to fish before and after the boats passage. They were not disturbed. There was one unsubstantiated report of a Canadian Goose missing after the event near Galice.

5. Sound

Some boats of this type generate a sound that could be annoying to some people.

FINDING: Sound was measured during the 1997 event. All of the boats except one, were between 86 dba and 104 dba. The one boat that was over was at 114 dba. The State of Oregon requires that the boats generate no more than 104 dBA trackside (OAR 340-035-0040 (2)(g) This is equivalent to the sound generated from a screaming child.

6. Social Implications

Displacement of other users.

Memorial day weekend is one of the busiest weekends of the year. In prior years the Boatnik event used the river on only one day of the three-day weekend. This proposal would use small portions of all three days. The experience of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 rafters and other water based recreational users per day could be affected. The degree and type of effect would depend upon their perception of the intervening event and the timing of their float.

FINDING: There were reports from few people that changed their plans to avoid river recreation on the day of the events. Far fewer than the 40,000 plus that enjoyed the event.

7. Sanitation

Large crowds could impose a sanitation problem at places like Hog creek, Hellgate overlook etc.

FINDING: No sanitation problems were observed or reported during either previous year's event.

8. Crowd and Traffic Controls

This event will draw a large crowd that might be difficult to control.

FINDING: There were no crowd or traffic control problems observed or reported during either of the previous years events.

9. Character of event/Increase in Motorized Use.

There is some concern that this proposal is an unwelcome change from the traditional uses of the Hellgate Recreation Area. The opinion is that a jet boat event of this type is out of character with this section of river when compared to historical and present watercraft activities.

Some commentors are opposed to any kind of motorized use on the river and object to any increase in that type of use. They do not feel that this is a legitimate type of spectator sport.

As stated in the decision by IBLA in case 98-280:

Mere differences of opinion provide no basis for reversal of BLM's Decision if it is reasonable and supported by the record on the appeal. Oregon Natural Resources Council 139 IBLA 16, 22 (1997) and cases there cited.

10. Economics

Is the event of economic value to the community?

FINDING: The actual economic impact of this one event is difficult to evaluate separately from the other events occurring. They all contribute to attracting people to the area to spend their money.

William Judy III, a member of the active club, states in this deposition of May 21, 1998 for IBLA 98-280 as follows:

At (5)

Keeping spectators in the park is how the Active Club raises funds. If the event is not there, people are more likely to leave.

And at (6)

The estimates of the number of spectators which visit the park range from 50,000 to 80,000 over the course of the weekend.

All profits derived from this event are used to support the needs and activities of the children in Josephine County.

In a letter from the Grants Pass City Manager, William A. Peterson Jr. he states: "We bring to Grants Pass over 100,000 visitors for this weekend, with millions of dollars in local economic impact."

11. Commercial Operating Plan Conflict.

Some have asserted that this proposal is not in accordance with the Medford BLM'S Commercial Permittee Operation Plan for Special Use Permittees. The Operating plan does not allow exclusive use of the river to any permittee.

FINDING: The Boatnik permit does not grant exclusive use rights, nor does it amend any other permit.

All marine events such as Boatnik, must be authorized by the Oregon State Marine Board under a marine event permit. This permit stands alone and contains its own stipulations. A permit such as this has been obtained yearly throughout the history of the Boatnik event. Every year the permit has stipulated that the Josephine County Marine Deputy institute appropriate safety measures in the conduct of the event. Every year, the Marine Deputy closes the river **during** the event. The Marine Deputy has the authority to close the river at any time of the year if the safety of river users may be compromised for whatever reason.

The BLM's Special Recreation Permit states that the permittee must abide by all state and local statutes in the conduct of the permitted activity. Through consultation with the Marine Board, the Marine Deputy determined that the river should be temporarily "cleared" during the course of the event. The Josephine County Sheriff's Office assumes primary responsibility for boating safety and is well within

12. NEPA Defects RE: Headwaters Appeal IBLA 98-280 (Appendix B)

FINDING: This proposed action was appealed and a request for a stay of decision was filed by a party protesting the activity. IBLA affirmed the decision and the stay was denied. They found no errors of fact or procedure.

C. Proposed Action and/or Alternatives

1. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to temporarily amend Special Recreation Permit number MRP-251 to include a jet boat river event for APBA classes A through C and unlimited. Future decisions on this issue will be reflected in the RAMP-EIS for this section of river.

The unlimited class jet boats are 16 to 22 feet long they are powered by gas or methanol engines that can develop over 450 hp and can go as fast as 120 mph. The other classes are limited in performance to varying degrees. There will be up to 25 boats in the event.

The permit amendment would allow boats to race within the Recreation Section of the Rogue Wild and Scenic River. Twenty-three miles of the Recreation section would be used (from the mouth of the Applegate River to Almeda park). The entire event would be between Riverside Park in Grants Pass to Almeda park, near Galice, for a total one-way distance of 28 miles. This event would be held on two days, Saturday May 29 and Sunday May 30, 1999.

The following is an outline of how the event would be run.

Boats would leave Riverside Park and run to Almeda Bar. The first start times on both days will be 9:00 a.m.. There will be an approximate one-minute interval between each boat as they start. They will proceed down river to Almeda Park. It should take 30 to 40 minutes for all of the boats to reach Almeda Park. When they reach Almeda Park they will restage. They will check all equipment, refuel etc, and wait to start the upriver return run. The return run will start at 12:00 noon, with the event ending at 1:00 p.m.

Implementation features of the proposed action.

Implementation features of the proposed action were developed to address or mitigate anticipated adverse environmental impacts identified in the scoping process, which might stem from the implementation of the proposed action/preferred alternative, or other alternatives.

The boating safety issue is the most important issue for this proposal. A great deal of attention has been given to it. For additional information on boating safety on the Rogue River, see Rogue River Boating Safety and Conflict Study (WRC 1995).

The numbers shown in parentheses indicate the scoping issue that the implementation features of the proposed action were developed to resolve or mitigate.

- a. This is a timed event as opposed to boat against boat. This reduces the risk of an accident due to boats overtaking one another. (Issue 1)
- b. Only drivers skilled at white water racing are allowed to participate in this event. (Issue 1)
- c. All boats must undergo a technical review before they are allowed to enter the event. (Issue 1)
- d. The Grants Pass Active Club will be required to obtain all State, local, and Federal permits, licenses, and other permission prior to the event. The event will be run in accordance with the

APBA regulations. (Issue 1)

- e. Sweeper" boats would be sent down river 30 minutes before the boats are to run, to ensure the river is clear of people and debris. (Issue number 1)
- f. All boats will be in radio contact with event officials to ensure a safe course. (Issue 1)
- g. Security personnel will be positioned at major spectator areas with access to the river to ensure people are kept out of the water when the boats are running. (Issue 1)
- h. Medical personnel will be on call and placed in strategic positions along the event course and the last boat in the competition will have a surgeon on board. (Issue 1)
- i. In the event of a mishap or a stalled boat, the event could be stopped completely or the course cleared immediately by the racer's association, depending on the position and the severity of the mishap. (Issue 1)
- j. Josephine County Sheriff will coordinate safety and crowd control. (Issue 1 and 8)
- k. The Active Club will notifying the public of the race and subsequent river closure times through **accurate** advertising or news releases in local newspapers and media. (Issue 6)
- l. All boats involved, patrol and race, will carry fire fighting equipment. (Issue 1)
- m. Contingency plans in case of emergency spills or leaks by hazardous materials will be in place prior to the commencement of all activities. Fuel and oil absorbent pads will be available on site.(Issue 1)
- n. Boats are designed with spill proof gas tanks and the engine is attached directly to the boat hull (i.e., no rubber vibration connectors) so that it will not be ejected from the boat in case of a mishap. (Issue 1)
- o. All boats are required to be muffled so that they do not emit more that 104 dBA at 100 feet. (Issue 5)
- p. Patrol boats will carry a quantity of absorbent booms to deal with a hazardous material spill. (Issue 1)
- q. Boat landings along the event route will be posted, with the event times and other pertinent information. They will be posted and maintained two week prior to the event, until the completion of the event. (Issues 1, 8 and 6)
- r. There will be a radio backup by using Ham radio operators. (Issue 1)
- s. The permittee will be required to place portable toilets at strategic locations along the event route. (Issue 7)

2. Alternative to the Proposed Action (Alternative A)

This alternative is the proposed action with the river traffic control times extended from 9:00 AM to 1:00 pm. This alternative allows for more control of other users of the river. This is not a complete closure of the river but the Sheriff's Deputies will control departures and give boaters instruction on when to be off of the river for the event.

This alternative was developed to enhance the safety aspect of the event. All other aspects of this alternative are the same as the proposed action.

3. No Action Alternative

The requested permit amendment would be denied and the event would be run as currently permitted. The currently permitted event is for small hydroplanes. They race on Memorial day (Monday, May 26) from Riverside park in Grants Pass to Robertson Bridge and turn around.

Chapter 2 Affected Environment

Threatened or Endangered Species

Threatened or Endangered species are those species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended (Act)(16 U.S.C.1531 et seq.). Through Federal mandates, protection of threatened and endangered species includes preparation of recovery plans and consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife service prior to any action which may effect a species or their habitat.

Habitat found within the proposed Boatnik project area may be associated with the following threatened species: bald eagle, northern spotted owl, and marbled murrelet. For endangered species, habitat within the project area may be associated with the peregrine falcon.

Bald eagles use large conifers for roosting and nesting and feed on both fish and waterfowl which are often found in abundance along the river. Currently, there are two known bald eagle nests within the Grants Pass Resource Area. One of these nests is greater than ten miles from the proposed Boatnik activities. It will not be considered for potential impacts associated with the Boatnik activities. The second nest is located approximately 1.5 miles from the river corridor. It will be considered for potential impacts associated with the proposed Boatnik activities.

Although nests have not been located, observations of bald eagle pairs in the vicinity of the Boatnik racecourse suggest that there may be other territories not yet documented. During several reproductive seasons, adult bald eagle pairs have been observed at several locations within the Boatnik racecourse and include the following locations: Ennis Riffle, Robertson Bridge and Centennial Gulch. Based on this, it is suspected that these birds may represent nesting pairs. However, previous surveys have failed to document nests associated with these pairs. Additional surveys would be required to determine the presence of other bald eagle nest sites within the project area.

Northern spotted owls are associated with old growth conifer forests. Douglas fir forest, hardwood/conifer forest and canyon/live oak/Douglas fir all have the potential to provide spotted owl nesting, roosting or foraging habitat. Approximately 3,675 acres of these combined habitats occur in the Rogue River recreational corridor. Although there are no known spotted owl nest sites located within the river corridor, spotted owls are a wide ranging species which likely utilize the above habitats for foraging, roosting and dispersal.

Marbled murrelets are small, secretive sea birds that use large old growth trees for nesting. Suitable nesting habitat requires large limbs (six inches or greater in diameter) that are moss covered or provide some platform for a nest.

Currently the USFWS considers any old growth conifer habitat within fifty miles of the coast as suitable habitat. The entire Recreational section of the Rogue River is within this fifty mile zone.

The area included for Boatnik is within Marbled Murrelet Area D as defined in the 8/1/96 Biological Assessment. Within this area, there are no seasonal or daily operating restrictions for disturbance only projects. This is based on the low likelihood of marbled murrelets occupying the area.

Limited surveys for marbled murrelets have been conducted along the Rogue River by the US Forest Service and BLM. Areas surveyed include the section from near the mouth of the Rogue River continuing to Grants Pass. Marbled murrelets were found along the river to an area just west of the town of Agness (approximately 30 miles west of the Boatnik racecourse). A total of 5,486 acres of marbled murrelet surveys have been conducted on the Medford District. No marbled murrelets have been detected on the BLM Medford District. Based on the distance from known occupied areas (Area B), it is predicted that additional surveys are unlikely to result in future marbled murrelet detections on the Medford District.

Peregrine falcons nest on large rock outcrops and cliffs. Most of the suitable nesting habitat for these birds is located in the lower recreational section of the Rogue River below Argo Rifle. There is one documented peregrine falcon nest approximately three miles from the proposed activities. Peregrine falcons feed primarily on passerine birds but do take a wide array of other birds including waterfowl, seagulls and woodpeckers. Peregrine falcons are a wide ranging species which may use this portion of the river for foraging.

Other Wildlife Species of Interest

Great blue herons are year round residents of the Rogue River corridor. They feed in shallow waters along the edges of the river. Great blue herons are colonial nesters which feed their young primarily on small fish captured in close proximity to their rookeries. Herons begin nesting in February and the young fledge in July. There are several great blue heron rookeries located within the river corridor associated with the proposed Boatnik activities.

Osprey nest in the tops of snags or trees with dead tops in close proximity to water. They feed primarily on fish and can be found in association with rivers and lakes. There are numerous nests located within the river corridor associated with the proposed Boatnik activities

Chapter 3 Environmental Consequences

A. Introduction

Only substantive site-specific environmental changes that would result from implementing the proposed action or alternatives are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered affects to that component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no affects.

Similarly, unless addressed specifically, the following were found not to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality; areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC); cultural or historical resources; Native American religious sites; prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; endangered, threatened, or sensitive plant, animal or fish species; water quality; wetlands/riparian zones; wild and scenic rivers; and wilderness areas.

As required by the first two EAs', the events were monitored by BLM personnel. The event was monitored to

determine if certain issues were valid areas for concern. Issues not fully resolved in Chapter 1, Section B. "Scoping Issues Relevant to the Proposal" are discussed here.

C. Site Specific and Cumulative, Beneficial or Adverse Affects of the Alternatives

1. Proposed Action

- a. This will be a unique event to observe and experience for up to 40,000 spectators.. This is a World class event with other events in three other countries.
- b. The boat drivers themselves will enjoy the experience of racing on this section of the Rogue.
- c. There would be an economic benefit to the local community. The tourists attracted to this event will be spending money for food and lodging and some will return to utilize the recreational facilities of the area at another time.
- d. The Active club derives income from this event which they use for beneficial activities in the local community.
- e. Fish: The event will take place outside of chinook spawning season so disturbance of redds is not an issue. Disturbance to adult and juvenile fish is of concern.. .
Past fishery research focused on: (1) survival (2) stress, (3) choice of habitat, and (4) susceptibility of juvenile salmonids to predation. The results of the research indicate juvenile anadromous salmonid survival and distribution is not significantly hindered by motorized and non-motorized boats to warrant major changes in boating operations. One of the major issues was the stranding of juvenile salmonids on the shoreline. During the 1980's public concern was expressed about the sightings of juvenile salmonids stranded on the Rogue River shoreline in the Hellgate Recreation from motorized boats. This concern was addressed intensely in the juvenile fish study which determined there were no impacts from motorized boats upon juvenile salmon or steelhead. Mostly non-native crayfish were found stranded in low numbers on the shoreline of the Hellgate Recreation Section. See Effects of Boat Traffic on Juvenile Salmonids in the Rogue River (Satterthwaite 1995)
- f. Wildlife: In general, the proposed amendment represents a disturbance consistent with other permitted recreational motorized boats on the Rogue River. Based on this, the potential impacts are likely to be similar. Typically, wildlife species occupying the project area are already habituated to certain levels of disturbance associated with recreational motorized boats. The greatest level of risk may be associated with the high speed of boat travel which increases the risk of collision between boats and wildlife.
- g. Threatened and Endangered Species: Because the known bald eagle nest is greater than one mile from the proposed activities, there is no anticipated impact to the nest or to the nesting birds. It is likely that any bald eagles utilizing the project area for foraging are already habituated to certain levels of disturbance associated with recreational motorized boats. The greatest level of

risk may be associated with the high speed of boat travel which increases the risk of collision between boats and eagles.

The proposed Boatnik activities are consistent with the Pacific Bald Eagle Plan which includes the following direction (1.332):

Picnicking, camping, blasting, firearm use, timber harvest, and low level aircraft operations should not be allowed within 400m of nests and roosts during periods of eagle use. These activities should also be regulated up to 800m from nests and roosts where eagles have line-of-sight vision. Critical nesting periods vary throughout the recovery area but generally fall between 1 January and 31 August. Key wintering areas need protection from disturbance from approximately 15 November to 15 March.

The Boatnik activities are not anticipated to result in lost reproductive success. Because the Proposed Action is in compliance with the Pacific Bald Eagle Plan, the determination is that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle.

Bald eagle surveys will be conducted prior to the Boatnik 1999 activities. The emphasis of these surveys will be to document the presence of nests associated with the bald eagle pairs observed in the vicinity of the Boatnik racecourse. If future surveys result in the documentation of additional bald eagle nest sites within the project area, a determination will be made regarding compliance with the Pacific Bald Eagle Plan and Endangered Species Act. This determination would be considered in future management decisions.

The low probability of marbled murrelets occupying the Boatnik racecourse minimizes the risk of potential impacts. Additionally, the existing levels of disturbance associated with the river corridor may have already impacted the probability of marbled murrelets occupying the project area. If any marbled murrelets occupied the project area, they would likely be already habituated to certain levels of disturbance associated with recreational boats. The proposed Boatnik activities are not anticipated to result in lost reproductive success. The determination is that the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect the marbled murrelet.

Spotted owls may be disturbed due to noise and movement around nest sites. Although more than 20 years of intensive research on spotted owls suggest that most individuals are relatively tolerant of disturbances, there are no quantitative data to evaluate the impacts of disturbance due to various management activities (Biological Opinion 9/98). However, it is likely that any spotted owls occupying the project area are already habituated to certain levels of disturbance associated with recreational boats. The proposed Boatnik activities are not anticipated to result in lost reproductive success. The determination is that the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect the spotted owl.

Peregrine falcons are a wide ranging species which forage opportunistically. Based upon the distance of the known nest from the proposed Boatnik activities (>3 miles), the determination is that the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect the peregrine falcon.

g. Sound: Some boats of this type generate a sound that is annoying to some people even at long distance. See Sound inventory Background Paper (Walker and Littlefield 1994) and A Survey of the attitude of residents along the Hellgate Recreation Area of the Rogue River toward user groups and their impact (York, Rowland, and Salley 1994). Oregon Administrative Rules for racing watercraft read as follows: *Watercraft Racing Vehicle. No motor sports facility owner and*

no person owning or controlling a watercraft racing vehicle shall cause or permit its operation at any motor sports facility unless the vehicle is equipped with a properly installed and well-maintained muffler and noise emissions from its operation do not exceed 105 dbA at trackside.
[OAR340-035-0040(2)(g)]

h. Social Issues.

Displacement of other users

Displacement of other users was one of the most often mentioned reasons for disliking the event. This included comments from guides and outfitters.

Memorial Day weekend is one of the busiest weekends of the year for recreation along this stretch of the Rogue River. In prior years, the Boatnik event used the river on only one day of the three-day weekend. This proposal would use all three days with two of those days, Saturday and Sunday, using a longer section of river, closing that section for approximately three hours on each day.

Most displacement will be mitigated through event start times and the duration of the event. The event times were scheduled with consideration of Hellgate Excursion and to minimize conflict with float boaters. (see discussion).

Unique experience for many.

From 30,000 to 100,000 people will attend this event over the 3 days. This type of event would provide a very unique recreational experience for the people of this region. This is an international event, with boats and drivers coming from all over the world. Their recreation experience will be enhanced.

Discussion:

It appears that there are three basic attitudes towards this proposal.

There are some people that feel the river should only be used for peaceful endeavors, such as floating and fishing, and are actively opposed to the event. For them the event is an unwelcome intrusion into their weekend. They will have four hours of their weekend disturbed. This section of the Rogue is managed for the enjoyment of a broad range of people with a broad range of interests. This event is of a very short duration and occurs only one weekend a year.

There are other people that don't care to watch the event but are not opposed to it. They do, however want to be able to raft on the river during the weekend. We have modified the Proposed Action to consider the needs of these people by changing the event times.

The event starts at 9:00 a.m. This start time will close the river from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. Since most rafters put on the river at about 10:00 a.m., they should not be inconvenienced by the first event. The second half of the event will start at 12:00 noon and the river will be closed until 1:00 p.m. This portion of the event will take place when many rafters pull off of the river and have lunch. These changes will minimize the disruption to their float. These people will probably have a good experience, but it will be slightly encumbered. The recreationists that are interested in watching the event will be able to start their trip before 9:00 a.m. and have excellent viewing

position choices for both heats.

The last group of people are the estimated 40,000 to 80,000 spectators that will observe this event. They will be witnessing something that probably most of them have never seen before. A white-water powerboat race. They will be having a positive and unique recreational experience as spectators.

This is an individual perception of preferences for the types of activities that should be allowed on the river

i. Landowners

Some landowners adjacent to the river will be annoyed by the activity. The peace of their weekend will be disturbed. Others will enjoy being able to watch the event from their property. It is purely a matter of personal preference.

g. Wild and Scenic River Values

There is no evidence that this permit amendment will have any short or long term adverse impacts on the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Rogue Wild and Scenic River. It will have a positive impact by enhancing the recreational experience of some users.

This proposal adds a new dimension to the recreation value. White water powerboat racing is truly a unique spectator event. This section of the Rogue River is one of the more challenging rivers that the racers use and is therefore more exciting for the spectator.

2. Alternative to the Proposed Action (Alternative A)

This alternative will have the same impacts as the Proposed Action except for:

h. Social issues.

This alternative may result in an increased time period when people who wish to float the river will not be allowed to launch. This will cause some additional inconvenience for these people.

3. No Action Alternative (No unlimited class)

The No Action Alternative would limit the Active Club's events to the traditional hydroplane race, which will be held on Memorial Day, Monday, May 31 at 1:00 p.m., and goes from Grants Pass to Robertson Bridge and back.

Effects associated with the No Action Alternative would include the loss of revenue to the community and the Active Club. The prospective spectators and boat drivers would not be able to enjoy the unique experience.

Chapter 4

Agencies and Persons Consulted

A. Coordination with Other Agencies/Entities.

Oregon State Marine Board, Josephine County Sheriffs Dept., Southern Oregon Power Boat Association, Hellgate Excursions, Valley Fire, Care Ambulance and Josephine County Parks Department.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Section 7 compliance T and E species.
National Marine Fisheries Service

B. Public Involvement

History of public involvement:

April 24, 1997 Initial Scoping.

May 10, 1997 Legal notice Grants Pass Courier and Medford Mail Tribune requesting comments.

August, 12, 1997 News release requesting post-event comments.

January 16, 1998 Letter to all interested parties requesting comments on 1998 event proposal.

April 15, 1998 Legal Notice Grants Pass Courier

April 17, 1998 Legal Notice Medford Mail Tribune

Public Meetings

The 1997 proposal was discussed at a meeting on Sept 17, 1996. The following were in attendance: Oregon State Marine Board, City of Grants Pass, Josephine County Sheriffs Dept., Cal-Or River Racers, GPAC Drag Boat Participants, Southern Oregon Power Boat Association, Hellgate Excursions, Valley Fire, Care Ambulance, Brady Adams State Senator and Bob Repine State Representative.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS 1999 PROPOSAL
RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD FOR THE SCOPING LETTER

comment/concern	number
General dislike	2
Displacement of other users	4
Will be too noisy	1
Out of character with WSR/Rogue	1
Wildlife impacts	2
Haz/mat	1
Harms environment (general)	1
Water quality	1
Disturbance to sensitive species	1
The event will be enjoyable (general support)	4
Positive economic benefit	2
Will have little or no environmental impact	1
Good publicity for Grants Pass	1
Displacement of other users insignificant	3
Active club organizes well	1
Not out of character with WSR designation	2
Loved last years event	2

Note: Many comments were received after the end of the comment period but before the decision was finalized. They are summarized below.

Final 3-16-99

The Grants Pass Active Club sponsored advertisements requesting comments concerning the Boatnik events. A summary of the responses is included as appendix A. They had 450 responses, 378 were in favor of the race and 72 responses were not in favor of the race.

City Council of Grants Pass Resolution NO. 4003 in favor of the event is Appendix C.

Josephine County Board of Commissioners Resolution No. 99-16 in favor of the event is Appendix D.

Letter from the Illinois Valley Lions Club in favor of the event with 22 signatures.

There were 6 letters from individuals in favor of the event.

B. Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

Copies of the completed EA document will be available in the BLM Medford District Office.

A public comment period was held from December 11, 1998 to January 28, 1999 there were 30 letters of comment.