

John Day Snake Resource Advisory Council Meeting

June 18, 2020

Meeting convened at 6 p.m. Oct. 15 via teleconference

Members present: Bob Krein, Randy Jones, Terry Drever Gee, Gary Gustafson, Jim Reiss, Steve Lent

Agency Reps and others: Don Gonzalez, Vale BLM and Designated Federal Official; Larisa Bogardus, Vale BLM RAC coordinator; Shanda Dekome, Deschutes NF; Shane Jeffries, Ochoco NF; Amanda Roberts, Heidi Mottl, Kirsten Heins, Jeff Kitchens, Prineville BLM; Ed Guzman, Malheur NF/Prairie City District Ranger;

Public: Art Waugh, committee member pending reappointment; Mary Fleischmann, Bitterroot Great Old Broads; Susie Koppert, rockhound; Katie Nelson; Jean Waugh; Shay White, Hells Canyon Recreation Collaborative.

NOTE: Due to the lack of a quorum, the RAC could discuss items on the agenda, but could not vote on them.

Proposed expansion of the John Day River fee season to include a fall season of Sept. 1 to Nov. 30 for Segment 1

Art Waugh summarized the May 20 subcommittee presentation and discussion.

Management's objective is to protect and enhance the river's outstanding values for a high quality visitor experience – primarily fishing and hunting. A permit is already required for this section of the river during that time, BLM is only asking the RAC to support charging the same fee for fall permits as it does for the spring/summer season permits. Currently, fall river users are only charged the recreation.gov processing fee of \$6, which goes to support the web system. The proposed fees of \$10 for one day or \$20 for a multi-day permit would be dedicated to improvements along this section of the river.

Is this time sensitive? If there was a quorum tonight and the fees were recommended, they could have been implemented this fall.

Break for PUBLIC COMMENT at 6:40 p.m.

None.

Resume discussion of proposed expansion of the John Day River fee season to include a fall season of Sept. 1 to Nov. 30 for Segment 1

Jim Reiss referenced a letter from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that indicated concern that allowing permits during runs will allow hatchery fish to intermingle. The John Day is one of the most important wild fishing resources in Oregon.

Kirstin Heins noted there is a culture along the John Day River to protect the resource, with effort focused on creating a high-quality visitor experience. BLM is committed to investing in infrastructure. The permit fees are just one piece of many. Land and Water Conservation Funds are another.

Randy Jones noted everyone is here because they care about the river and we're talking about the future of the river.

Fall is a very low water season and fish struggle to compete during this time. Any time something new is proposed, we should ask questions, Reiss said.

Art Waugh asked how many launches would be lost by implementing fee permits. Hedi Mottl said over 5 years, only one launch request wasn't permitted due to the maximum number of permits already being issued. Kirstin Heins said the fees are relatively nominal and haven't been a deterrent in the spring/summer season.

Randy Jones apologized for the lack of a quorum preventing a vote that would allow fees to be implemented this fall.

Kirstin Heins thanks everyone for their time and participation, adding she hoped this discussion would make future discussions better.

RAC members expressed their ongoing frustration with the number of vacancies and the lack of appointments. With only 10 active members and 9 needed for a quorum, just two absences means no quorum. Volunteers can't always participate, that is why there are 5 members in each category, but only 3 required for a quorum.

Could members vote by email? The problem is that people not privy to the conversations are not able to weigh in on decisions, Don Gonzalez said. Actions are taken by the full RAC so land management decisions are defensible. Transparency and public trust are essential.

Chairman Jones committed to personally calling each RAC member prior to every meeting to encourage attendance.

Roundtable

Gary Gustafson said this will be a dire year with water shortages and coronavirus going into wildfire season. Agencies will need to be prepared.

Steve Lent expressed concern about the old Cabin Lake Ranger Station and hopes it will be preserved.

Chairman Jones reported an MOU has been reached for the Wallowa Dam modification project, which will raise the water level 4 feet, increase irrigation to Umatilla and Morrow counties, and address fish passage, sacred sites and other tribal concerns. This could have implications for how Wild & Scenic Rivers are managed.

Jim Reiss commented on a newspaper article about staycations in Sisters that led to bumper-to-bumper traffic. Although Three Creek Lake was closed, the road was damaged by the volume of traffic.

He also expressed concern about the recent mandatory ethics training for RAC members, during which the presenter said guides should recuse themselves from river management discussions. How can a RAC have knowledgeable people to inform discussions if they can't participate? Consensus was to request a full ethics presentation at the October RAC meeting.

Future agenda topics – Categorical exclusions for mule deer and sage-grouse under the Farm Bill; Ochoco Wild Horse Management Plan; the Lower Deschutes River Business Plan will be presented to the

RAC this winter; BLM grazing permits presentation; a future presentation regarding the Restoration Fuels torrefaction plant under construction in John Day.