

**John Day Snake Resource Advisory Council Planning Subcommittee Meeting  
Oregon/Washington BLM  
September 16, 2020  
Meeting convened at 6 p.m. via Zoom**

RAC members present: Jim Boethin, Bob Krein, Art Waugh, Jim Reiss, Steve Lent, Randy Jones, Gary Gustafson, Terri Drever Gee, Greg Jackle.

Agency representatives: Don Gonzalez, Vale BLM and Designated Federal Official; Larisa Bogardus, Vale BLM RAC coordinator; Teresa Fraser and Dave Plummer, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest; Tom Beaucage and Amanda Roberts, Prineville BLM/Central Oregon Field Office; Joe Aragon, Vale BLM/Baker Field Office.

Public: None

**Wallowa-Whitman National Forest recreation fee proposal for selected developed campgrounds and cabin rentals**

Dave Plummer said the forest began developing a fee proposal three years ago. With no Forest Service recreation RAC available, the forest brought the proposal to JDS RAC. More recently, the forest has been advised to bring the proposal to the Forest Service's newly created Northeast Oregon RAC, but it does not yet have a quorum.

This is an informal presentation to familiarize the JDS RAC with the proposal, which will be brought back for consideration of a recommendation at a later date.

WWNF Recreation Program Lead Teresa Fraser said the forest manages facilities from the Elkhorns to the Wallows (see PowerPoint). The plan is to increase fees already being collected for campgrounds, simplify the cabin rental fee structure, establish new fees for some sites and vehicles fees in some areas, and drop fees at two campgrounds and a trailhead.

This effort will help the forest approach a more sustainable developed recreation program and align revenue with our increasing operations and maintenance costs. This alignment will also allow the WWNF to be competitive with adjacent recreation providers and still provide a quality recreation experience to our visitors.

Eight of the affected sites are in Idaho and she is not sure the RAC can address those. Yes, the RAC can, DFO Don Gonzalez said.

Jim Reiss asked if fees for concessionaire-operated sites go to the Forest Service. Concessionaires pay a portion of fees collected back to the Forest Service, which also approves concessionaire fees.

Traditionally, the Forest Service ran its own campgrounds and kept all revenues. Eventually, the FS couldn't afford to operate all the sites and began contracting with concessionaires to make them economically viable.

If increases are approved, would the lifetime pass still get a 50% discount? Yes.

Are any of these sites associated with a past proposal for fees within Hells Canyon Recreation Area? It does include some campgrounds, but boating use is not part of this proposal.

A \$5 per day vehicle fee is unfair, because a vehicle could carry two people or 10. That can be looked at, but is probably Forest Service-wide. It comes down to the practicality of enforcement. It's easy to see a vehicle at a trailhead, it's much harder to find hikers on the trail.

Will hunters and fishers be required to pay fees? Only for developed sites and trails, not for dispersed use.

### **Malheur National Forest briefing regarding development of a recreation fee proposal**

No presentation.

### **Prineville BLM Lower John Day River (segment 1) fall fee proposal**

Central Oregon Field Manager Amanda Roberts presented. This has been presented to the RAC twice, but there was not a quorum in attendance at the RAC's June business meeting. She is now refreshing the group in preparation for a possible recommendation during the October business meeting.

From the brief RAC discussion in June, the remaining issue was resolution of fisheries impacts and impacts to fisheries in Segment 1 during this extended fee season proposed – the dynamics of hatchery strays, hatchery fish take, and impacts of users (if any) on this interplay.

Earlier this year, the RAC endorsed a proposal to extend the spring fee season from May 15-July 10 to May 1-July 15 to better align with heavy river use. No changes were made to the fees themselves. They remain \$10 per group for day use or \$20 per group for overnight.

This time, the proposal is to add a fall fee season to Segment 1, from Cottonwood down to Tumwater Falls, from Sept. 1 and Nov. 30. Currently, there is no fee for that time frame, just the \$6 transaction fee for a launch permit.

RAC member Jim Reiss commented that ODFW is concerned about stray hatchery fish. If the fee will jeopardize fishing access, he is totally against it.

The most permits ever issued is 4, and the limit is set at 6 to preserve the quality of the experience for users.

Oregon is growing and this could hamper removal of hatchery fish. There are many more launches in the summer. Fall launches limit access to hunters and fishers. The decision to limit permits to 6 has already been made. This can be discussed in future planning actions. This was a lesson learned for ODFW, Greg Jackle said. They will look more carefully at proposals in the future. If there is a big run next year, there could be higher demand for permits.

Hatchery fish cross-breeding with native fish is a problem. The question is if a six-launch limit is enough to prevent hatchery fish from moving upstream. Can it be changed if needed? We have to trust the agency will bring it back.

It feels unnecessary to limit the number of people. The limits are already in place, the only question before the RAC is the fees. The limits are based on many, many user comments on the entire river management plan and are part of the best alternative selection.

Will the fee drive away potential users? The fees are minimal and the RAC supported the current fees six years ago.

Will this go to the full RAC for a vote? Yes.

Does the group support the proposal, and if so, are you in favor of presenting it to the RAC for a recommendation? Waugh will draft the subcommittee's report to the full RAC for consideration at the October meeting.

### **Prineville BLM Lower John Day River campground fee proposal**

No presentation.

### **Time for Public Comment and Response**

None.

### **Wrap-up**

With the ongoing wildfires, the RAC would like to talk about fuel loads and large-scale projects to remove fuels and salvage or recover damaged timber. It was suggested to appoint a fuels management and treatment subcommittee. Don Gonzalez said he would ask each agency to report on overstocks, acres treated, progress in Wildland Urban Interface areas and needs for more work. It's also an economic and environmental issue, those should be discussed as well.

Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.