



Meeting Notes
Southern Malheur National Forest Meeting on Access
In regard to the Blue Mountains Revised Forest Plan
June 16, 2015

Senior Center, Burns, OR
Hosted by High Desert Partnership

The High Desert Partnership is a nonprofit organization that uses the collaborative process to help solve challenging issues in our region. In a collaborative role, the High Desert Partnership doesn't take a position on issues while providing facilitation and support for groups working together. Through grants, The Partnership funds Jack Southworth in his exceptional work with the Harney County Restoration Collaborative, which has successfully implemented a number of projects on the southern Malheur Forest and now with this series of Forest Plan Revision meetings. For more information on the High Desert Partnership, please visit www.highdesertpartnership.org

These notes reflect the best efforts of the notetaker to capture the discussion of meeting participants, but in no way are these notes a word-for-word transcript as the notetaker may have unintentionally missed some statements or dialogue.

Participants: Mike Masterson, Gene Scrivner, Jon Reponen, Steven Grasty, Cindy Grasty, Karen, Dan Haak, Ann Haak, Pete Runnels, Samantha White, Tom Segal, Alec Oliver, Jenny Stearns, Dick, Jack Southworth, Brenda Smith (notetaker)

US Forest Service participants: Steve Beverlin, Ryan Nehl, Christy Cheyne, Roy Sutcliffe, Lori Bailey, Lis Grinspoon, Sabrina Stadler, Dennis Dougherty

Organizations represented (as listed on the sign-in sheet): Grant County Court, Burns Times Herald, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service

Introductions - Who are you, where are you from and what are your worst fears in regard to the Access portion of the revised Forest Plan?

- Mike Masterson -- I'm from Hines and I like to hunt, fish, and drive on public lands. I'm worried about closed roads not letting me do that.
- Gene Scrivner -- I help ranchers move cattle and I like to 4-wheel on ATVs. My worst fear is UNKNOWNs, which seems to be a lot of things.
- Steve Beverlin – Forest Supervisor on the Malheur NF. His worst fear is that the access discussion and our inability to sit down in a group will prohibit us from moving forward on other things.
- Ryan Neil – Dep. Forest Supervisor from Ohio. He's eager to hear from the public.

- Liz Grinspoon – USFS Regional social scientist from Portland. Her worst fear is that all the hard work over the years will not bear fruit unless we can come to a mutual understanding and understand each other better.
- Christy Cheyne – Emigrant Creek District Ranger – Her worst fear is thinking about some of the concerns of the public that she never hears and can never then address. She is worried that overall the public voices that are here today are not being heard and then incorporated into the plan. Project planning is a public process
- Jon Reponen– His worst fear is that the last road to his land will be closed (it is scheduled to be closed).
- Steve Grasty -- Harney Co. Judge -- I have no idea what this meeting is about – Worst fear is that people will continue to mistrust the system. Not necessarily the local people and managers working here, but the federal government and that they will shut down what we are trying to do. Who defines access? Some of the words we hear might have different meaning to different people and we don't know what they mean and therefore can't react appropriately. Want to see the USFS figure out a way to understand what these people are saying and figure out what access means to them.
- Cindy Grasty – local citizen – Worst fear is that she won't be able to get into areas she used to love to move around in.
- Sabrina Stadler – USFS –Her worst fear is that we can't help people learn how to move forward with the management plan and how to be constructive in all these fears.
- Roy Sutcliffe – Wildlife Emigrant Creek RD -- Would like to see areas without vehicle traffic so we have the full gamut of recreation opportunities for people to who like roads and those that want to get away from roads.
- Karen – local citizen – Biggest fear is that we are losing opportunities for non-motorized use. Pointed out that some of “us” like to get away from traffic. She would like to see more emphasis on trails.
- Lori Bailey, FS Hines – Biggest fear is that people will take the stance of all or nothing and we can't meet in the middle. Don't think we should close all roads or leave all open but feels we should meet in the middle. She fears the loud voices of the extremists.
- Dan Haak – Burns – Access is important. Representative of a local ORV group. One fear is we will ignore some of the science that's out there and go with the touchy feely stuff. There is lots of new science in this working group that has some real meaning. My single biggest fear is not understanding the forest plan, what is it, and what is it going to do to us. I feel it is coming down from DC and taking control away from the local focus group. We have to follow the rule but the rule doesn't make any sense. He fears single-issue people (they really get his goat) that cannot discuss and meet in the middle.
- Ann Haak – recently retired teacher in Burns -- Worst fear is that all the collaboration in the world will not change what is happening. Fears that people who don't live in this area and don't know what it is like will micro-manage and tell us what to do. Especially from people who live in completely different climates. Generally she is afraid that what we are able to do will be dictated to us from outside people with outside money and the local crowd will lose control.



- Dennis Dougherty – His fear is that we won't have the ability to find the common ground. There is a continued misunderstanding of terms, acronyms, etc, etc, and how they fit into the USFS framework.
- Pete Runnels – HC Citizens – I am here to hear the wants. What everyone can live with. My fear is more of a mandate from Washington coming down the line and being forced on us. I want to be able to say down the road that I was at the meeting and I went on a tour to see roads being closed, and I want to see something that the USFS can work with and the citizens can work with.
- Samantha White – reporter with Burns Times Herald.
- Tom Segal – ODFW – Our fear as an agency is that we can't get travel management right and the result will be elk off the forest and on private land unavailable to the public. We would then have to kill cows on private land and further reduce opportunities for hunters.
- Alec Oliver – Seneca – Forest permit – His biggest fear is that the agency folk can work as hard as they want to help us out but if someone higher doesn't like what we are doing they will just transfer the local agency folk out and bring somebody new into the picture. There is middle ground to be found about closed roads and open roads. He disagrees on the wildlife issues and sees elk using roads just as much and isn't sure they should be factored into wildlife management.
- Jenny Stearns – local citizen – Loves the forest and her biggest problem is rules being dictated by "outsiders" who don't have a clue.
- Dick – Local Citizen -- I wonder if the forest actually has a plan – I logged 30 years ago – they wouldn't let us cut in the riparian – now all those trees are falling down in the creek and the water is open. I don't see follow through. What they are cutting now is driving deer and elk out of the woods and onto ranches.

Access and Forest Planning: How we got to where we are. Information from Dennis Doherty, Recreation Planner, Wallowa Whitman National Forest

Forest Plan Revision:

A big component of this presentation is in response to EIS press releases that comingled forest access and travel management planning. They are two separate processes. Forest Plan Revision Process and Travel Management Plan is separate.

The forest plan revision process is separate from the travel management planning. It gets to the sentiment that local people don't like national policy but we are a national agency. It's a tough challenge but we can manipulate it and figure out how to incorporate local stuff and considerations.

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 directs every forest in the country to develop a forest plan that will guide resource management. It gives the agency a framework to build the planning rule. What resources are we supposed to manage and guide? We have to go back 16 years earlier than NFMA to the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act (MUSYA) of 1960 that added range, recreation, wildlife and fish to the original forest directives. Then in 1964 congress threw in Wilderness with the Wilderness Act. Now the USFS has to incorporate Wilderness, range, recreation, wildlife, timber, and fish resources



into forest management. This current forest plan revision comes out of NFMA and now, 39 years later, we are challenged with more conflicting resource groups and uses.

NFMA directed us to manage those resources and said that local conditions will influence these plans that those plans will include these so and so goals and objectives. Within those goals and objectives we have to follow standards and guidelines. For example: no building roads in Wilderness. However, these are the plan components where we have decision space and it's where the rubber meets the road because we do have some control over this. These plan components involve figuring out management areas where folks can go and look at things like desirable conditions, suitable uses, etc. It all interrelates, especially plan components. NFMA directed us to develop the plan while considering local conditions.

Basically, NFMA said everybody has to build a forest plan and that forest plan should have "x, y, and z". And it established a monitoring framework that should provide feedback to the USFS and communities to see if goals are being met and also provide the opportunity for adaptive management.

We are in the process of developing the forest management plan. The rule is that the travel management plan will not be addressed until the forest management plan is complete.

Travel Management Planning

Congress didn't do anything about this. Didn't give us any direction. Since the passing of NFMA and MUYSA, stuff like ATVs have come out and we didn't foresee these when we created our original forest plans. Where does it fit under NFMA or MUSYA? It's listed under outdoor rec and its definition is unwieldy and vague. In '72 Nixon issued executive order 11644 which directed federal agencies that managed public lands to start managing for this use. An amendment 5 years later directed the USFS to come up with a scheme of policy that will manage this use without detriment to other resources, promote the safety of all users, and minimize conflicts among the various users on those lands. In 2005 they came up with a travel management rule (on a national level). Received probably 400,000 comments.

These are done in subparts to address three different components and it's where most of the confusion happens.

Subpart A -- It's interdisciplinary and it is in the regulations to coordinate with affected citizens and will develop broad, over-reaching policies. It's simply analysis of what is needed to administer and maintain road systems on the forest.

Subpart B – Directs the forest to designate routes, open areas, trails, issue maps, and prohibits cross country travel unless approved. This is the most volatile part of the travel management plan. It is done under NEPA, provides alternatives, and is done in concert with everybody. This subpart comes directly from the 2005 travel management rule. Within this though there is opportunity. There is a lot of room for creativity in here to balance all the uses in the MUYSA and create a good system. This is where the Forest Plan Revision is connected to Travel Management Plan. We have to create a travel management plan in accordance to the Forest Plan.

Subpart C – involves designation of over-snow routes and areas where applicable.

Questions:

- *How does the forest plan revision relate to forest travel plan? How does it influence it?*
 - *All the components of the Forest Plan Revision trump the Forest Travel Plan. The forest plan revision dictates all the activities that will be allowed on the forest and the travel management plan has to conform to that.*
- *Why did this meeting come about?*
 - *The public needed clarification. We started the forest plan revision in 2004, it came out last year, and we got a pretty bad grade. Now we are trying to change the plan, sit down with the public, and clarify things. We got over 1000 comments on our plan and pinpointed certain key issues of access, grazing, and rate of restoration. Jack volunteered to facilitate the meetings. In September there will be a report compiling all three meetings.*
- *(Dan Haak) Part of the concern I am hearing is that while we are not going to do travel management planning until the forest plan revisions are done, there are still roads being closed on 40,000 acre basis. People see these smaller projects with their own travel management plans, they see roads being closed, but they are somehow not part of the travel management plan. How does all this trickle down to the common joe? Not a lot of people will educate themselves about these processes.*
 - ~~*What does the forest travel planning process mean? It's an over-arching document that is in the forest plan.*~~ *[Correction requested by USFS staff: Forest Planning and Travel Management are two separate processes. A Forest Plan is an over-arching document.] It designates areas on a landscape scale. It's easier to take a 40,000 acre bite of the elephant so things are sometimes done on the project scale. Projects tier into the forest plan.*

What are your suggestions for better aligning customary use on the Malheur with the federal laws and regulations that have to be followed?

Concerns, Comments, Problems, and Improvements from around the circle

- Mike Mayernik -- Good to see the framework and what the USFS has to deal with.
- Cindy – I understand it a bit better but still not enough to make a comment. There are lots of rules and regulations but does anybody take time to see what this does to a community?
 - Response from Liz Grinspoon – Her job as a regional social scientist working for the USFS is to try and figure out the needs and values of a community and how it is influenced by and can be worked into federal laws, regulations, and policy.
- Steven Grasty – Harney County Court has backed up federal agencies almost to a fault. We have had a tight working relationship but whenever it comes to closing or opening a road we always, always, always better be going through a valid public process.
 - Response from Sabrina – While we have an umbrella framework to operate within most of the heartburn seems to come at the project level when a road is closed. We need to have more open books and transparency with the community about the process the USFS is going through to make decisions. Talk with them every step of the way and

make clear the framework that we must work within. Litigation happens at the project level.

- I think I've got it. I think I understand the framework. So, now what? It's like you told me the joke but didn't give the punch line.
- It seems to me like one thing after another just keeps coming down the pipe. It's kind of like the USFS had an order from Nixon to manage the forests for these waves of OHV's and then nothing happened. There is a big abstraction to the public about what the reality of these meetings, revisions, and plans will be to the public.
- I'm for multiple use. The access part gets to me because I have older relatives that can no longer get to where they want to go or have been going for years. We might not be able to hike when we are 80, but we should still be able to drive down roads we have been driving for 50 years. Roads closed without explanation is a concern.
- Bob Stearns – I am of the age that if you close a road then I simply won't be able to get to the country that it accessed. Planning for only 15 years is shortsightedness. You should plan for much longer than that. The Hines Logging Company had a long-term and sustainable timber plan that was good for people and wildlife. When Reagan came in he opened everything up and the sustainability went by the wayside.
- Christy Cheyne – I am concerned that I am still failing to reach out to the community about issues and meetings especially regarding road closures. Despite our best efforts there are still people not getting reached and that is troublesome. I would like ideas about how I can better reach folks. I also hope there is a follow up to get some comments regarding access.
- My fear is that the forest plan's goal is to create an open forest with closed roads. And then we will follow that up with open roads and a closed forest.
- Jack Southworth: How do you resolve the divide between thinking roads or vegetation are the biggest issue in wildlife management?
 - Response from Alec Oliver (rancher): The feed is better on private ground. The forage on public ground is too poor due to over-growth so the elk are hanging out where the eating is good.
 - Response from Tom Segal with ODFW – The roads allow a lot of other use that you wouldn't see on private land. Camping, mushroom picking, shed hunting, and other similar activities further disturb elk beyond the act of simply driving down a road. Forage quality is a big deal but research does show that roads do drive elk out of an area.
- What it comes down to is too much regulation and too much B.S. that the public can't understand any of it. I need help to prove that there is cooperation. Proof that when the public brings issues to the USFS they then see those issues reflected in policy and decisions. Majority of the public doesn't feel like it's worth their time to show up.
- How can we (USFS) find a balance so that people can find some, but maybe not all, of what they want? We are trying to find that balance. We don't like to hear that somebody has to go all the way to the Eagle Cap Wilderness to find quiet but we also don't like hearing that some road someone has driven for 40 years is now closed. It would be nice to know these things. We are trying to balance those kind of things.

- Is there any weight given to someone from this county versus from somebody out of state or somewhere else?
 - We are a national forest and we manage the nation's forest resources. Generally, yes, local comments tend to be given more weight mainly because they tend to be more specific. Those kinds of comments provide more weight and substance to our decisions and policy making. The more specific the comment the more we can use them.
- I want to thank the UFSS for being more open in management. Five years ago we didn't have these discussions and we've had a difficult time getting these doors open. The level of cooperation on the Malheur has really changed for the better. I've got a mind that might be able to put together the cocktail of all the factors that are involved in the USFS process but a lot of people might not. Your PR side of things is lacking. You need to blow your own horn a little bit, let people know what you are doing. We've got to boil this onion down to something that people can understand. There needs to be a better way to get comments from the public because a lot of people can't understand these large, convoluted documents. How do we get young people involved? One other issue is Wilderness. I get the feeling that this road-less idea is a decision that has already been made. There is a trust issue there when there is a decision that's already been made.
- I'm confused because I thought we were here to talk about Forest Revision and access. We haven't talked about it and I'm not sure what exactly we are talking about.
- My concern is to make sure that non-motorized users are given just as much weight as motorized users. I'm also concerned that "quiet users" are more hesitant and afraid to speak up.
- Alec Oliver -- What about the idea of going back to old grazing practices with proper modernization in order to mimic conditions that allow for these open-glade habitats and the abundant wildlife that seem to occur with them? We need more effective management in grazing allotments.

Next steps: Steve Beverlin, Malheur National Forest Supervisor, will describe the planning process and timeline.

The interim for me is to go back, think, and absorb all of this stuff. I get more information about how to make better decisions from the information from these meetings. We will yard up the comments. These kinds of meeting are happening at the Washington level and in other communities and counties around the nation but the success really depends on the community. Some really, really can't sit down like this and collaborate.

Closing: How do you feel about this evening's meeting and the Access issue?

- Bob -- There were some good comments here.
- Jenny -- There are a lot of different aspects I've heard. Some that I've never heard before and it really makes you think.
- Concerned we really didn't talk about access in the Forest Plan. I'm also interested in hearing from silent users as well so they don't get trumped by louder folk.



- It's always good to have an open forum, take the blinders off, and rehash what we really have as goals.
- There aren't a lot of opportunities for non-motorized users to go somewhere they won't be impacted by OHVs. I want my daughter to be able to experience a quiet forest as well.
- The format of this meeting is very helpful in order to keep track of who's talking.
- Cooperation with the local USFS is good and we have confidence in you.
- This was a good meeting and you all seem to be more open than previous managers. We've had trouble getting heard before. And we appreciate seeing you guys write stuff down.
- The dynamics of the forest and the changes that occur are light speed ahead of us and we can't keep up with them. The process has become so cumbersome and the lack of consistency of personnel in the USFS and BLM hampers this entire process. I keep coming back to it because I can't see how to fix it and I'd really like to see the younger people become much more involved.
- I thought it was a really good meeting. I appreciated the delineation of the Forest Plan Revision and the Travel Plan.
- I'm confused about Dan's onion analogy. As far as multiple use goes I think we've got enough room out there for everyone.
- I would really like to thank everyone. It's been helpful to hear from everybody and we would be happy to continue this conversation just give us a call or come in and see us. We will follow up with you.
- I thought it was all interesting.
- If the plan is more than 20 pages then you've got it wrong. I think that this meeting was beneficial and thanks to all you USFS people for being here and working with us. But at some point this is our forest. If you don't put local decision making and collaborative decision making as priority then it won't work.
- I thought that Dennis did a good job of clearing up the delineation about the framework of the Forest Plan Revision and for the Forest Travel plan fits into it.
- I'm very impressed with the community. I'm advocating getting out and speaking to people more.
- I think you guys do a good job. Lets sing kumbaya. But the legal framework needs to be addressed. A way you might approach this public relations thing in these projects and road closures is to provide more information. There are some more ways you can go about explaining these things. Basically, public relations just need to be improved.
- As a first time attendee I found it interesting and I'm realizing now that there is a lot of stuff out there to contend with. It feels good to participate.