



for the greatest good



BLUE MOUNTAINS
FOREST PLAN REVISION - 2015
Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman
National Forests

Meeting Notes

Public Workshop on Access, Wilderness, and the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision

Hosted by the Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC)

Enterprise, Oregon | Wallowa County Fairgrounds | July 13, 2015

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. Also, the notes do not attempt to correct or clarify any statements made by participants.

Participants: Susan Roberts, John Williams, Bruce Dunn, Nils Christofferson, Todd, Paul, Wanda Ballard, Tork Ballard, Dennis Sands, Ben Tippett, Mark Bujanovich, Alex Kuehn, Earl Haines, Melissa Hoffman, Pat Wortman, Raider Heck, Dan Bronson, Bryan Greenlaw, Bob McFaul, Dale Potter, Ramona Creighton, John Creighton, Frank Mason, Bruce Bliven, Doug Wickre, Gail Wickre, Jim Dunham, Connie Dunham, Ken Pagano, Brian Lepper, Dustin James, Andrew Polumsky, Mike Lockhart, Jea Oh, Ken Nash, Lori Schaafsma, Tom Schaafsma, Larry Willis, Leita Barlow, Steve Grant, Dan Cornett, Shirley Cribbs, Larry Cribbs, Gina Birkmaier, Chad Nash, Peggy Kite Martin, Margery Shaffer, Clayton Lamb, Mike Hayward, Tim Newton, Sean Sealy, Martin B., Joe, Ross Duncamp, Don Bronson, Kathleen Cathey, Katie Nesbit, John Dunn, Al Josephy, Rex Storm, Bill Ables, Ed Manally, Jack Snyder, Larry Snook, Jack Southworth

US Forest Service (FS) participants: Tom Montoya, Chuck Oliver, Jake Lubera, Sabrina Stadler, Dennis Dougherty, Katy Gray (notetaker)

Organizations represented: Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC), Senator Wyden's Office, Wallowa County Chieftain, Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc., Forest Access for All, Hells Canyon Preservation Council, Wallowa Valley Trail Riders Association, Wolf Free Oregon, Blue Mountains Riders, US Forest Service

--

Introduction - Jack Southworth, Facilitator, High Desert Partnership: Thank you for being here tonight. We are here to discuss access, wilderness, and the Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision. We will start with a round of introductions, then we'll hear from the Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee, and work our way around the circle again.

If this is a successful meeting what would you like to see?

- Open dialogue; farming history; ensure access
- Worked in timber since the '60s; need a bigger voice in forest planning to "do" -- put our best knowledge to work; enjoy the high mountains

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- Maintain access for hunting and picking berries; suffer from arthritis, so less on foot.
- Open dialogue; solutions that folks can live with and understand
- Open dialogue; want Wallowa County to have voice
- Access for OHVs; access to firewood
- Motorcycle enthusiast; work to keep access open for all.
- Seeking greater understanding of County issues with the Forest Plan and learn ways to resolve them; this is a learning opportunity.
- Curious; just listening
- Learn about the process and how it affects tourism
- Logging; health of the forest
- Eventually, would like to see the Blue Mountains Forest Plan set us up to improve forests and communities in Wallowa County.
- Forest Service hears what people of Wallowa County want and need for forest access
- Learn about the community and concerns
- Communities have a greater say -- express what to do with resources
- Forest health, keeping roads open, and access; fire access
- Decisions made that benefit the County
- Keeping roads open and current access levels now if not more. Umatilla needs to be opened up.
- Blue Mountain Riders (100-200 people); like to use trails
- Keep trails clear and access to wilderness
- Keeping conditions
- Here to learn about the process; want access
- Want access to the forest; here to see that the meeting goes as well as the one in John Day.
- Listening
- Transparency and honesty; maintain access if not increase
- Same on more access. Need to get to place where we utilize our natural resources (before it goes to waste); we talk and the FS does whatever it wants; want to see the FS listening to the public.
- Use of the forest; define Desired Future Condition. Why do we have a FS if environmentalists dictate activities?
- Tired of FS catering to special interests
- Have inholdings within National Forest; want to see FS maintain multiple uses; open to forestry and other uses; firewood. Want to understand why FS is closing roads without a Travel Management Plan in place.
- Here to build relationships; get to know the community better; that would be a good meeting.
- Would like to see more logging and thinning; no need to cut off access
- Born/raised here; been to most of the meetings; want to have a true and honest understanding, for all of us; transparency
- Moved here for the beauty, not to have forest shut down; don't shut down roads or wood jobs
- Had a contract for 45 years; logging, thinning, roads; delivered to four different mills; healthy school system with art programs; took that for granted; now helping grandkids out of our own pocket; Wallowa County maintains the roads. We are a ranch family; livestock and grazing interests; we are letting the forests deteriorate – becoming a jungle, like a garden that hasn't been tended. Hope to see action; realize that the numbers may represent a small portion of the county, but we're a voice that needs to be heard.

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- Avid user of the forests; want open access; no more signs in woods that say you can't go there.
- Here to listen; want to leave roads open
- Want to be involved in fixing the plan
- Moved here from Clackamas; want to keep rights to the land; proud American
- Interest in local business; local resident; people in this room represent a lot more people than are here; understand these voices and not the special interest groups; forest being given to the environmentalist 501c3 groups
- Want to see forests remain open unless there is an imminent reason; open access for multiple use
- From Joseph; been to every meeting
- Seems 100% not in agreement; want to understand why there isn't agreement; we need education about the issues
- As a Committee, learning about the needs of the folks we represent; need more coordination; would like to be considered a lead agency along with the FS.
- Rancher; accessing 25 years; changing
- First FS road closure meeting; mediator there; corporate world read BS pretty strongly
- Forests belong to us; no road closures, period
- Here to represent Senator Wyden's office; here to listen and learn
- Here with the Wallowa County Chieftain
- Want to hear what all the excitement is about.
- Represent 60 forest contractors; forest road provide access for multiple uses, and they are a high-value asset for the logging industry; we improve and construct them.
- 3rd generation using the forests for food, shelter, and water; need to work to establish a definition of culture; build the word "community" into the vision statement
- Historic use of forest; both sides of the family; fire issue; need open roads for fire safety; improved roads and open roads could save the life of an employee; want to see current access maintained; looking for current law that may have been overlooked
- Want the FS to recognize aviation is part of the access issue; about 400+ individuals; infrastructure; maintenance; airstrips are an important mode of access; recreation
- Learn about why roads are getting closed; 143 miles; signs going up (e.g., Sled Springs)
- Closed down four sawmills because of spotted owl; don't know what's next; now cattle? Want to learn about how endangered species affect the plan; go back and open every road since 1950.
- 3rd generation contractor; raised seven kids to be stewards of Wallowas; goal should be to educate and build solutions – not just bellyache about what's going on; focus on economy in Wallowa County; cowboy, computer, fabrication; utilize the resources; acknowledge the experience in the room; many collective years of stewardship; FS needs to listen and bend the rules in our favor.
- Recreation Planner with the FS; here to learn and listen to concerns; want to find the creativity that comes with the years of experience and exposure in the room
- ATV club and snowmobilers; it is the public's land; we know what works; protect access for the future; focus on economics; utilize resources before fire burns them up
- Want to have dialogue with the FS – not just hear the FS talk
- Like to downhill ski, XC ski, oversnow vehicles; two million acres of public lands; find something for everyone; economics that support family wage jobs
- OSU Agriculture Extension Service on Wallowa County NRAC; conversation and dialogue with FS; open and honest

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- Hope this is not like having a tooth pulled
- Been part of these discussions; FS has been saying “we matter” for years; want to see something accomplished/implemented that’s a benefit to local community and economy; Union County has comments about the Forest Plan Revision from meetings years back that might differ from ones submitted formally.
- Respect for economics; agencies regulating us out of business
- Want access for my kids

Input from the Wallowa County NRAC:

- The cutthroat contracting stopped; fire access – need to be able to get there to fight fires and manage the forest; roads are in poor condition – even ones that are “open”.
- Road decommissioning – easier to destroy than create. How much would it cost to open them back up? How much does it cost to tear the road out? What environmental impact does that have?
- Roads built in the 50s, 60s, 70s were well-built roads; they could be reused; need to look at decommissioning v. closure.
- Wallowa County road layer; Option “W” for the plan
- Insects; dead and dying trees; fires destroying wood; can’t cut after a fire
- Sled Springs OHV plan; can shut down due to erosion; map shows road closures
- Mediation resulted in closures; due to litigation by Hells Canyon Preservation Council and Nez Perce Tribe, court ordered no Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) yet; post routes; ATV/motorcycle process.
- Q: Motorized access plan – implementing motorized access?
 - o Response from Tom Montoya (Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor): Decision was signed and litigated in mid-2000.
 - o Yes, it’s a signed decision. Mediation came to common ground.
 - o The CFR has not been completed; routes are currently being signed.
- Importance of airstrips as part of the infrastructure of Wallowa County and FS. Importance for public safety; also fire, hunting, recreation. FS infrastructure includes airstrips.
- We already submitted the details on behalf of the County. Covered major issues.
- Looking for solutions? Prep was done on a Wallowa County specific forest plan that has been adopted by the Board of Commissioners. Wanted their forest operated – run through a public process. Please address that 60-page plan for specific solutions from the County.
- Current draft Forest Plan is biased against use and in favor of protection; balance is unacceptable. Can you change numbers to come out with acceptable plan?
- 357,000 acres of wilderness in Wallowa County; already have the largest amount of any eastern Oregon county; no more needed; no more set-aside areas.
- Need active management; less than 250,000 acres to work with; rest is restricted
- Desired future conditions in the alternatives, very confusing and seem unattainable; as if man can’t step on the land; pristine conditions unmarked by tracks; if that is the target we are in deep trouble; the “ologists” pile on and make them unattainable.
- Solution: Write a desired future condition in a collaborative manner; collectively write per acre, for an area; then write alternatives that move closer to this collaborative desired future condition; e.g., “protect forest from wildfire” – not enough actions defined to do that.

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- Access – if we’re going to manage the forest then we need to be able to get there; this includes forest work, recreation, etc. Half the roads aren’t being used; they are not doing damage just left the way they are.
- Oregon has land-use planning laws; a solution is to follow the laws of the state of Oregon for land-use planning. Also, the plan is missing the word “communities” in the vision statement; acknowledge the genius of place; build on our pioneer spirit; the intrinsic value of the county and valuing the economics and social value
- Wilderness in the Preferred Alternative: 20,000 more acres of wilderness; findings seem to dictate more wilderness, but additional wilderness is not necessary. How were those decisions made?
 - o Sabrina Stadler, Forest Plan Revision Team Leader: There is a range of alternatives
- Suggestion: Take wilderness out of the preferred alternative
- Road closures equal condensing the users to a smaller area which would increase the impact on a smaller track of land. If that happens, the Travel Management Plan could show that overuse is causing damage and harm. Solution: Do not close roads; instead take care of site-specific problems to avoid overuse; consider law enforcement
- Firewood – very difficult for non-commercial firewood gatherers to gain access to cut firewood, based on a survey of firewood users in Wallowa County, it takes 1.5 hours to get firewood of good quality. Same goes for berry and mushrooms. Maintain open access as needed; for many people firewood is the only way they can heat their home in the winter; overgrown roads could be an opportunity.
- Open letter re: climate change; carbon release v. sequestration; not as fire but as wood / paper
- Include the “community” part into the plan
- Roads are a search and rescue issue; hikers/campers may need rescue
- Desired Condition: science outdated on computer models; bias for desired effect; climate change dries rainfall; fall and spring associated with more growth and added fuels; need prescribed burns, thinning, fuels management; need access for that.
- Eastern Oregon Counties Association Letter: Addresses further wilderness / wildlife corridors / buffer zones, etc. Backcountry Roadless is de facto wilderness. Solution: Don’t add proposed roadless or wilderness areas; no buffer zones; elk eat alongside roads.
- Take a hard look at 3C and Firewood Cutting Survey; 4700 cords of wood recorded; need to have firewood cutting as industry vs a recreation activity; access to cut firewood or opening firewood areas (e.g., Lostine valley needs thinning for fire reduction); provides local spending to get gas, food, etc.
- Decrease wilderness
- Negative impact on economics from closing roads; OHV users provide economic benefit and pay vehicle expenses; Outdoor Industry Ass. Study found many millions spent by OHV users; loss of even a small portion of that can be an immense effect.
- On the other hand, there is a negative relation between wilderness and county payroll.
- Closing roads will have major negative impacts on county economics.
- Roads provide access to treat noxious weeds
- Roads also provide important fire breaks; need to keep clear; Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) needs access; also re-seeding
- Separate the issue of road closures vs the budget; the FS says it doesn’t have the money to maintain all of the roads; they can be maintained by others.
- Desired future conditions – unless these targets change, we don’t need to talk about the rest; need to include people in all desired conditions.

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- Why do we need numbers in the plan? It is supposed to be setting the strategic direction -- not doing the actual planning. Allow flexibility for all types of decisions; should not be deciding closures, wilderness, etc.
- Woodcutting – 6 or 7% of surveyed people cut their own firewood; no jobs through stewardship contracting. How to take the firewood cutters and pair them with the thinning that needs accomplished?
- CFR 36.2.223 – Stewardship Handbook – free use granted to individuals for improvement of the forest; \$700,000 fuels reduction hired non-local workers with ARRA funds; need to identify wood cutting as an industry v. recreational activity; identified in County plan as an industry; NRAC needs more representation from individual forest users and less from industry.
- No new road construction in any alternative; forests don't get managed by people
- Watershed analysis to determine economic and ecological benefits and needs of the roads within the watershed; 2.5 miles per square mile. What do we need to manage?
- Consider all the businesses that will be left out of the trickle -- gas, shops, restaurants, etc. I get 2-3 calls a week asking "Where do I go?" Compared with the landbase, the economic benefit of the road system is important. Need true site-specific consideration of small businesses.

Recap by FS representatives:

- Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor: shared what he heard around the room regarding access for multiple uses.
- Sabrina Stadler, Team Leader, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision: expressed the need to look at the desired conditions, wilderness, firewood, and multiple uses.
- Dennis Dougherty, Recreation Planner, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision: expressed understanding of the economic challenges and need for multiple uses.

Input from participants around the circle:

- How will the FS act on suggested solutions? Prepare for lawsuits? Budgets? Throw all of the alternatives out? Look hard before doing that.
- Never arrested before in my life; want kids not to fear or worry. Is there a predetermined goal? Are we really being listened to or just going through the motions? Nobody liked the middle ground; now more dialogue. Can we really come to a consensus?
- Losing more and more. Can we win? Major fire in Sled Springs / Day Ridge. Burned forest, 600 acres. Mushrooms, huckleberries – should be able to take them out of the forest. Criminalize behavior; road doesn't tell you if you can drive there.
- Join forces; truth saying.
- What uses of wilderness? No maintenance or management; add to fuel load; use hand saws not chainsaws; outside wilderness better maintained; rules that don't allow us to use chainsaws in the wilderness keep people from going around down wood.
- Need "coordination"; FS must look at the Wallowa County Comprehensive Management Plan; must be considered; coordination meeting on 7/15.
- Go back 30-40 years; fire reduction; fuels reduction; now kids move away, because there aren't opportunities for them.
- Define what is "middle ground"? It isn't middle if it doesn't work for anyone.
- Been to all meetings; same basic answers: "I don't make the decision." Would like to see someone who makes the decision sitting in the room; would like to see Jim at the meetings. Mandate to reduce road coverage in FS prolonged 10 years.

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- I think the FS has a preconceived idea of what they think – an end goal in sight. Don't see that changing.
- Are we really being listened too? Where is the "other" side that expressed concern? Do they really have a vested interest? They threaten litigation and pay expenses to sue. Do we need to do that, so our side is heard? It seems the law is on their side, and we always give up some. Litigation concern – trust would be built if the public was listened to also.
- You may have comments from Chicago...or Virginia...but look at all the comments from locals who have better knowledge of the land.
- Will we have a say in the final? Safety concern given the few FS officers. ADA – for sure lawsuits.
- If all roads closed, no access to forest. Are none of the FS employees worried? Assume they will still have access. What about FS jobs if access is limited? What about the effects on the environment if all roads are closed? Not all should be.
- The farmer's best ground has his footprint on it; need a good working relationship; went to the effort to make no trace logging; tainted past; changed skid approach for cleanup. Can't make decisions; scapegoats for somebody up the list. Solution: Leave somebody here that remembers. FS missed the boat by not tapping into the generations; there is a lot of experience and knowledge here.
- FS mandated to keep trails open; Wilderness Act.
- Good working relationships with the FS employees that are actually out on the ground, interacting with the public, and taking pride in the work that they are completing.
- FS needs to back up. Would like to look back at the 1970 plan.
- Access for multiple use; recreation, hunting; trail system messed up.
- There isn't a Forest Plan? 1990 Plan. Logged, kept roads open; good hunting. Need roads open for hunting and recreation; support private landowners. There used to be industry; service stations were open all night – no business now.
- Why do we need the FS when the special interests shut us down? Is there a reason special interest groups get more say?
- Social and economic sections are broken out in the draft plan, but they should be included in everything; it is one package; home, life, history. Provision for Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) – what is the definition? How many years does it take to have a TCP. They said the archeologist will work with you. The Regional Forester said, "Tell me what you want, and I'll get it for you." Then, poof – gone.
- The National Historic Properties Act says to follow a process for TCP. Come in and talk to us, but will our voice be heard?
- Travel Management and Forest Plan Revision seem to run together; wilderness is gone; watersheds are gone; now designated areas. I am really serious about saving access.
- I think access will be gone...
- Over a thousand written comments: listen.
- How are you closing roads without a plan? Process for coding comments? Content on the web?
- The anger is palpable; we need to get something positive done. Solution: You have heard us, and it is time to address the issue.
- There are three National Forests involved and one Regional Forester, and people are advocating for a Wallowa County Comprehensive Management Plan – incorporated into Wallowa but not Umatilla or Malheur. Meetings here impact others; FS hands are tied by federal laws. We can win if we get into federal rules and regulations. We need to help the FS; talk to your Congressman; 1976 National Forest Management Act; need to help them.
- I question whether all comments will be read.

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- Open roads and managed roads; solutions needs to be responsive; draft Forest Plan doesn't address concerns in comments; there are de facto prohibitions on road access; look for what might be missed; subject to coordination with the County plan.
- Social and economic values need to be integrated; prepare for pending litigation; affirm right to access and the community benefit; design projects to balance econ/social with threatened/endangered species; partner with communities on stewardship. Impressed by passion; main topic is access to the National Forests and many people have strong feelings; many points of view; need to build a plan that can have a successful future and is best in the long run.
- Community should have more say than people with a 50-cent stamp. Canal fire reseeded after lawsuit and now ready to burn again.
- Been here since the start; would rather spend time with my grand-daughters; tired.
- Firewood is important – what are the laws, and how do I use them? No more road closures? Can't keep that promise. The state of Alaska has many areas with a semi-subsistence lifestyle. Can we look into a waiver for locals?
- Want a voice; want a result
- Said a lot of things that need to be said; the coordination meeting should have a big impact.
- This is just the same old thing.
- Will we get our concerns on the official record of this process? In addition to comments on the draft scoping / Environmental Impact Statement / Objection?
- Road density by 6 HUC (Hydrologic Unit Code) is too small.
- Coordination; look at the 10th Amendment to the Constitution – government to government.
- Wallowa County stepped up to coordinate / cooperate. Lower Joseph has 100,000 acres of timber and fuels.
- 2005 basis for management plan; no specifics – just guidelines; designated in certain areas. Look at maps; elk habitat takes up 90% of what is here in Wallowa County; 2-foot-wide creek, Salmon Creek, but need to be 100 feet from every creek
- Don't confuse passion with anger and love of this country. Why are horsemen better than ATVs or motorcycles?
- Eastern Oregon Counties Association letter: Permitting process – don't want it.
- The increase in wilderness is exacerbating road density.
- Firewood sales; check against the community firewood survey.
- Don't think that because we're "passionate", our opinions are not valid / objective. We care about the land; passion equates to caring.
- FS: High respect and appreciate everyone's openness.
- FS: Effort to reconnect with the community. Trust; our goal is to build a level of trust. We understand this affects everyone's life.
- Quick question: Only cut less than 24 inches – why?
- Fish hatchery; salmon recovery process; we don't live in that world. Come out of "Court" towards us.
- Thanks for hearing us all out. Road access is a common thread that transcends all uses: grazing and timber, etc., on both private and National Forest lands.
- Where are the sideboards, who determines those, and why does my heritage with the land not matter?
- Respond to local access concerns
- Change the purpose, need, vision, etc. to not have a bias against roads
- Focus on coordination with the County; use that to establish the "middle ground"

MEETING NOTES

(continued)

- Advance the research on the link between economic and social factors, and how they tie to the other portions of the plan.
- Consider recreation continuity and have things been looked at with regards to developed recreation and access
- Aviation: How is the plan going to address air strip access?
- How do I use the law to support my case?
- Look into the Alaska subsistence plan
- Include residential/domestic firewood in the volume