

Lower Deschutes River Managers Meeting Minutes

February 19, 2021

10 AM – 1 PM

Zoom: 823-2732-4439

Chaired by ODFW/ Rod French filling in for Mike Harrington

River Website: <https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/BWT/Pages/BWT-ldrms.aspx>

10:00 AM

Introductions: Scott Hege (Local Govt.); Rod French (ODFW); Sonni Hope (BLM); Corey Heath (ODFW); Jeff Kitchens (BLM); Steve Memminger (OPRD); Brad Houslet (CTWS); Kyle Hensley (BLM); Josh Mulhollem (OSMB); Lane Magill (Wasco Co. Sheriff); CeCe Mareila (BLM); Erik Pronol (BLM); Mike Millay (BLM); Tim Schwaretz (OSP); Mary Fleischmann (Facilitator- note taker)

PUBLIC: Brad Staples (Fishing guide/jet boats); Amy Hazel (Deschutes Angler Fly Shop); Rob Miles (Imperial/ Guide); Ron Walp (Citizen/ Maupin); Brian Sykes (Oregon Rafting); Carrie Morton (Adventures Without Limits – nonprofit)

10:12 AM

Review/ Additions to agenda/ Approval of agenda and Meeting Minutes from November 6, 2020

No additions to agenda, Mary revised minutes from feedback from Jeff. Motions made, Jeff 1st, Scott 2nd – motion passed to approved minutes.

10:14 AM

Old Business

- Frequent User Pass (FUP). Scott reported out that he needs to connect with Jeff K to figure out dates and time for first meeting as Jeff will be the presenting speaker giving the history of FUP, how much has it been used and answer questions of the proposed Working/focus group. The group then will make suggestions/recommendations as to if the FUP needs to be revised or maybe even eliminated. Tentative dates are March 30 or 31st. Scott will look at who's on the working/focus group and find out if they continue to be interested in this subject.
- Archives on the website. Steve and Jeff have been working on this. Tried google drive but that did not work out so well. Looking at a different way to get this information to OPRD.

Overall on their way to get everything on line by end of the year. Jeff shared that once Mike Millay comes on board he can lend a hand. Steve shared that once minutes are approved at meetings, then they will be posted on the website, with the most recent first.

- Surfing, /paddle board discussion. Jeff shared there is a discussion to develop a focus group but nothing has progressed yet and at this time the issue has been defined as a potential issue. Jeff further shared that need to identify which areas are of concern. Need to connect with partners, highlight the issues and put eyes on those areas and the challenges. Then can look at signage to educate the public. BLM and law enforcement might best find out those locations, but most complaints are coming from guides/boaters due to conflicts and safety concerns. Will refer this to IIT to develop a plan.
- Toilets. Steve reported that OPRD has completed installment of toilets on Segment 4. It cost \$50,000 total with installation, which is half of what previous compost toilets cost. These toilets are from Toilet Tech System and if successful, OPRD will look at installing the same on the John Day and at Smith Rock. Also looking at toilet at Starvation Lane boat ramp on the John Day. Jeff reported that BLM has completed toilet replacement on Segment 2. Looking at Segment 1 and what toilets will or will not be replaced. Need to do an EA. Will use same system OPRD is using. One of the challenges in reviewing the toilets is looking at their locations, which in some instances are in flood plains, railroad properties or affect cultural areas and not in the right location. Some will simply be abandoned and or placed in new locations. Any that were burnt from fires will not be replaced.
- Proposed amendments to fees. Jeff gave background as to how BLM got to this point. He presented to the RAC yesterday on this matter. In 2015 BLM proposed an amendment to the boater passes for go from \$5.00 per day and \$8.00 per weekend day to a flat rate of \$5.00 fee for boater passes. From this \$2.00 will go to OPRD and \$3.00 to BLM. In exploring this option Jeff found out that across the west the average cost for a boater pass was \$7.50 - \$9.00. BLM reviewed costs of maintenance on the river which comes to roughly \$730,000 to \$760,000. With the changed amendment BLM will not break even with the fees but the

\$5.00 fee will generate between \$100,000 and \$150,000 which goes back to the river. This proposal was made to the managers and then to the RAC. At the RAC a subcommittee asked about an increase of fees from non-boaters in Segment 1 and 4, to off- set costs. \$5.00 per person/per night camping fee for Segment 1 and 4. Managers approved this in 2018. 2019 RAC given update and approved. For these kinds of amendments BLM needs two levels of approval to make those changes – Managers and RAC. This was part of BLM's business plan but had to hit pause in 2020. Now the proposal will be going out for public review in March and April. BLM is required to have at best a 30 day review, but because of the nature of the Deschutes, BLM has decided to have a 120 day review so this will extend all the way thru July. In the fall this will be brought back to the RAC and Managers to get the groups approval.

- Jeff shared the review of boater pass uses for 2021
 - Segment 1 remains in limited entry with no reduction in daily use numbers. Daily target is 550.
 - Segment 2 there are no changes
 - Segment 3 A and 3 B come out of limited entry. Segment 3 A daily target is 300 and seasonal target is 15,000. Segment 3 B daily target is 250 and seasonal target is 13,600.
 - Segment 4 remains in limited entry with current daily target to remain at 214 (no reduction in daily targets), but if Segment 4 hits seasonal target in 2021 which is 18,300, then daily use target for 2022 will be reduced to 193.
 - SRP's there were 6 applications of which 4 SRP's were approved. 3 outfitters and 1 educational.

10:38 AM

New Business

- CTWS representation. Brad shared that Jen Graham and he will cover IIT and Manager Groups at this time. There currently is a hiring freeze but hoping for a potential additional position that could then attend meetings. Question BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) representation. Jeff shared that BIA is key stakeholder on the managers group and they also a signee on the plan. At this time Lori Anderson is supposed to retire in April. Jeff continued that the down side

of not having BIA representation is that they need to have a voice of decision made regarding the river and management plan. Managers cannot make any changes without their input. As an example is if there is a major change in the plan such as an amendment or NEPA need to have all signatures. Brad will have a conversation with Bobbi and see where it goes. There has not been any progress in the region. Jeff shared that if it would be helpful, the Managers group could put a positive and informative letter regarding why the need is there.

- Follow up regarding feedback/questions Scott received regarding Law Enforcement on the river – is it cost effective? Is it needed? Steve shared that OPRD has an agreement with Wasco Co. Sheriff Dept. and thinks it's a good agreement. Sheriff Magill gave a bit of the history of the agreement they have with OPRD. Originally OSP had the agreement and it cost \$250,000 a year. At some point OPRD came to the various sheriff's office to discuss the needs and eventually transferred the contract/agreement to Wasco Co. They had an agreement for a year round contract initially from Warm Springs to the mouth of the river. Those costs were roughly \$135,000- \$145,000. After one year the sheriff reviewed what they were doing and thought there were dollars being wasted. Their job is public safety, dealing with camping, driving and boater passes, not to handle resource enforcement (fishing and hunting). They reevaluated and still work year round but adjusted their patrols in season from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The costs at this time are roughly \$100,000 (\$ 90,000 for labor/personnel and \$10,000 for expenses, such as tire repairs, equipment repairs and fuel). 2019 they were on track with a full time deputy and then lost him/her. 2020 they expanded but due to issues with COVID probably only spent \$65,000 estimate on labor. 2021 will be different and they have 2 new deputies this year so will be back on track. He has statistical accumulated data that gets reported to OPRD, which covers contacts in campgrounds as well as boater passes (which is main focus). He also shared that he has worked with Brad Staples about safety issues on the river. Steve shared that he greatly appreciated how Lane streamlined everything and has made things more efficient. Jeff added that since 2018 if not for Lane and his team, there would have been many more people killed or harmed whether landslides, fires or boating

incidents. They are able to be much quicker to respond than BLM is able to and BLM is not able to evacuate people. Wasco Co Sheriff Dept. also helped with closures which would not have been successful in 2018 without their help. Lane shared that it is important to hear conversations of what citizens have concerns about so they can make improvements overall. Everyone needs to look at how to collaborate and educate. He added if you don't hear from others than you don't get new ideas for streamlining. Asked everyone to keep the Sheriff's office informed and if there is a way to improve services he wants to do that. There was a question regarding meetings with law enforcement, which did happen 2 years ago. They used to do a seasonal kick off meeting. Plan was to do that last year in April, but again COVID interfered. Is putting this back on his radar and will follow up with a meeting this year.

- Conversation regarding collaboration with OPRD and BLM. There was a discussion about this at the end of 2019 about hiring seasonal OPRD say to help with a survey system. BLM has too many hoops they have to do to conduct a survey. Need to get cost estimates and figure out a way that BLM can support and cover costs. This might be a good time to connect feasible upcoming season with a reasonable focus on non-boater use. Would have someone stationed at Heritage Landing and Deschutes River State Park to make contact with hikers and bikers to do the survey. Will look at segment 1 as well. OPRD has employees able to float and boat, which is another way to make these contacts. There have been trail counters and camera's but the data is pretty much a very rough estimate, need actual face time. This data has been collected from 2017 – 2019. The kinds of questions that would be helpful, besides the actual numbers would be: Are you staying overnight? What specifically are you doing? How did you hear about this area? Have you been here before? How often?

11:12 AM

Round Table Discussions and Updates

- Confederated Tribe of Warm Springs: Not a lot going on. Back to 100% with staff. Spring Chinook returns are tough and there will be limited fishing at Schears Falls. Campgrounds on all tribal lands are closed but open for day use for Trout fishing, all overnight is closed. March 5th Tribal Council will meet.
- OSMB – Nothing specific to share. If anyone needs regulatory assistance just reach out.
- OSP – Tim shared that staffing is good this year and people can expect to see more of a presence. There will be enforcement on the river. They are there for resource enforcement. There will be saturated enforcement down to Trout Creek. They have a new raft which will be better use for them than the previous drift boat. They also will be hiring a new position which is for special use.
- ODFW- The Wildlife Management Plan has been updated, which covers the lower 18 miles of the Deschutes. There will be a public ZOOM meeting February 23rd about this plan. Information can be found on the ODFW website. There will be no sport fishing for Spring Chinook and Steelhead numbers are pretty depressed. There will be some closures at Moody Island.
- Wasco Co. Sheriff – nothing else to report
- OPRD – Hired all seasonal staff in parks, there have not been full crews in the past few years. They are also fully funded this year.
- BLM – Jeff again introduced Sunni Hope who will be stationed in Maupin. Mike Millay will be starting March 1st as the Wild and Scenic River Recreation Planner. CeCe again has taken a new promotion but is filling in behind her for permits until a new person is hired. That person will oversee permits on the Deschutes, Crooked and John Day rivers. There is lots of restoration work going on in the White River Corridor and things could be epic if/when White River blows out. Will be using deferred maintenance money (which had been requested) to do some low hanging fruit maintenance. Looking at use analysis identifying what work needs to be done of which some will be limited due to NEPA. Looking at boat launches at Harpham and Sandy Beach and other areas on segment 1 and 2 and how they can be managed. BLM can do emergency management repairs but there will be no paving of ramps outside of Mack's Canyon. Have Mark Brown who will be supervisor of BLM law enforcement. In regards to roads, have been able to grad two times a year, but need some level of moisture. Need to get everyone to follow speed limits as this affects

maintenance and upgrades. BLM now has a rock truck to deal with slides and removal of boulders.

- Local Government – COVID. Wasco Co. has struggled quite a bit but beginning to turn the trend around. Hope by next week can move out of extreme risk category.
- Jeff posed question regarding closures if other agencies are looking at any major changes like returning to more restrictions and closures. OPRD doesn't think so. OSMB shared that closures are the last thing on their mind currently. State agencies not looking at that at this time. Doesn't appear that things will go backwards. Brad share that it is the same with the Tribes and they have been making progress with their vaccination program. The goal is no further government closures. ODFW doesn't see any immediate closures except for fire and no river closures.

11:29 AM

Public Comment

- Brad Staples – Shared that he helped OPRD with the new toilets to get them up river. He has photos of the construction and completion of this project which he is willing to share and will send to Mary to get to group. Brad also shared that that he was on segment 4 from June 13th to October 31st and used every powerboat day he could. He thinks the boater pass count is way off and needs to be re-evaluated. He did not see any large rafting groups this year, pretty much nonexistent which is not usually the case. He did observe many more walk-ins and biker's use but boat traffic was down. He also commended Sheriff Magill for looking at reducing funds and adjusting or making changes as needed in regards to service and agreements.
- Rob Miles – Encouraged the Tribes to do what they can do to open up campgrounds due the capacity issues in other areas. He hope that the March 5th meeting with Tribal Council can move on opening up campgrounds and thanked everyone for what they do.
- Amy Hazel – She brought up issue of electric bikes coming up from the mouth of the river on the trail on the east side. Wants to know what the rules and enforcement are. Steve shared that OPRD said that they are not limited and are allowed in certain areas. On the river are allowed up to the 2 mile mark. ODFW has different rules and does have signage. Rod with ODFW added that motorized or e-bikes are not allowed on ODFW lands. They do have signage but they are sometimes taken down. Jeff added that BLM just received updated E-bike guidance and will be starting to put up signage

regarding where they are and are not allowed. Cory shared that ODFW rules are consistent with travel plans but there is pressure to change these rules. Brad shared that if folks see e-bikes in restricted areas to report that to ODFW. Cory added that will BLM's regulations for e-bikes be in conjunction with ODFW and OPRD Need to pull signage together. OSP needs to have alignments of rules.

Amy also brought up launches on the John Day in the fall. Complaints about the put in's and take outs in a rapid. Steve shared that they will be moving the ramp as it will be unusable over time. Amy added they need to include more parking. Steve shared they are aware but it takes a lot of approvals and permits. Hopefully will have this addressed in late spring.

Final Discussion, Follow Ups and Action Items

- Tim shared that he can't really attend ZOOM meetings due to security but he can call in, so watch for his phone number calling in for meetings. Mary made a note.
- Follow up with IIT developing plan for surfing and paddleboard issues
- Revisit survey collaboration with OPRD and BLM
- Frequent User Permit – updates
- Tribal Campground updates
- **Place holder is conversation/discussion about E-bikes

NEXT MEETINGS: IIT May 7th 10AM – 1 PM
Managers May 21st 10 AM – 1 PM
Summer IIT/ Managers August 6th 10 AM – 1 PM
Fall IIT October 22nd 10 AM – 1 PM
Fall Managers November 5th 10 AM – 1 PM

11:52 AM **Meeting adjourned**