

Lower Deschutes Managers Meeting

Date and Time: May 29th, 2020

10 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: Skype

Conference ID # 2653400363

Phone: 503-446-4951 – Same ID number

Chair: Local Government

10:00 AM

Introductions: Scott Hege (Local Govt.); Chris Parkins (OPRD); Brian Cunnigham (CTWS); Jeff Kitchens (BLM); Tom Beucage (BLM); Rod French (ODFW); Brad Houslet (CTWS); Mike Harrington (ODFW); Lane Magill (Wasco Co. Sheriff); Dru Johnson (BLM); Celia M (BLM); Tim Schwartz (OSP); Mary Fleischmann (Facilitator).
PUBLIC: Rob Miles (Imperial Rafting); Liam Elio (Orion Expeditions); Rick Ellis; Sara K.

Additions to agenda/ Approval of minutes from February 21, 2020 meeting

- a. Jeff had something to add to agenda for new business
- b. Brian requested we keep an ongoing reminder for discussion regarding reviews of boat launches in segment 2 and 3; the Segment 3 EA. Conversations around emergency repairs as well as ongoing discussions about illegal ramps at Nena, Long Bend and Wapinitia.
- c. Chris P. moved to approve minutes from Feb. 21, 20 – Jeff 2nd. Motion passed.

Old Business:

- a. Jeff shared that BLM requested funding for Segment 4 EA. Need to work with partners to have a conversation and develop plans regarding what that will look like, plan for time frames, etc.
- b. In future will have what Brian requested above in on going old business.

New Business:

- a. Jeff shared that he thinks weekly or bi-weekly call in's to agencies to touch base with what is being seen on the river and to identify issues is a good idea as things are being phased in, particularly since the group meets so infrequently. Currently all launches are open and available as well as the ability to get boater passes on Rec.Gov. He thinks the group has been staying in touch with each other very organically and wonders if we need to setup up a time frame to communicate what is

going on. Scott agreed and was open to the idea. Group decided on next call in to be June 4th at 8:30 am, which Mary will set up. Will decide future calls when group deems it necessary.

- b. Next conversation was if the group needed to set up specific protocols if closures need to happen. Scott shared that counties will have to be part of that decision, if counties are not doing well, that mean closures and how that impacts the river. Chris shared he has started working with Outdoor recreation and touching base with Nate Stice with the Regional Solutions Team. Since outdoor recreation doesn't specifically work like the other phase in approaches in the state, it would be higher ups in government that would be making the call for closures. Chris has been told that as things reopen, there needs to be a very brief report or call sent to the local Health Authority/Dept. He is willing to take the lead on that. Jeff shared that BLM has to look at the Governor's office, the county and local partners as every agency has their own kind of protocols, but want to work together on this. Right now things are moving forward in the right trajectory – campgrounds are open and available as well as launch sites. If the Governor offers restrictions, then they coordinate with that and follow recommendations. BLM does not report to the Health Authority. State has their protocols, counties have protocols, and Federal Govt. has protocols as well as the Tribes. Different jurisdictions makes it impossible to create one protocol. What is important is to have communication on a regular basis and working with coordination with all partners. Scott shared that the counties have to apply for approval for re-openings to the Governor. They have no control as it comes from Salem. Chris shared that he is still willing to let the Health Authority know what is going on and willing to be point person.
- c. Whitewater surfing and paddle boarding on the Lower Deschutes. Jeff has been getting lots of calls regarding these two newer uses of the river. There is nothing in the plan which identifies or specifies this type of use on the river. This kind of use is becoming bigger and bigger. Question from the public is if I am only going to the edge of the river to enter and get out and I am not using a launch site or floating down, why do I need a boater pass? Jeff asked group of how we want to address this newest issue. It needs to be made clear what is considered a floating craft and Jeff wanted to bring this issue to everyone's attention so all agencies will have same message. Brian shared this is similar to many years ago when anglers were using float tubes to float across the river to the other side to fish – they would carry the tubes on their backs to get to the river. It was decided back then that once your feet leave the bottom of the river you need a pass – if you are untethered, you need a pass. Group decided that this is a

good conversation for the IIT to have and if need be form a subcommittee. Recommend IIT take this on for a discussion and do some research and see what recommendations they come up with.

Round Table Discussions and Updates

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs: Brian reported out (Brad had initial issues getting on call) that Harpham and Sandy Beach are open for day use only and camping at Harpham is closed. He recently visited segment 2 and looked at conditions of ramp at Sandy Beach which looks good for the whole season. He saw a lot of folks in the designated campgrounds and saw no boats from Maupin to Sandy Beach. Tribal council is relooking at camping at Harpham, but at this time all tribal lands are closed to camping. Scott thanked Tribal Council for convening to have a conversation about opening boat launches.

OSMB : Nothing to report at this time.

ODFW: Rod reported that ODFW currently do not have a lot of folks on the ground just yet. What was observed over the 3 day holiday is that there were a lot of anglers, in fact a high use of anglers for this time of year. Thinking part of that is due to folks just wanting to get out along with the Salmon hatch drawing people, which there are good conditions. People were doing very well with social distancing so no issue there. ODFW will be doing angling sampling come July 1st. Asked about how the fishing is, he simply said many people are catching crawfish.

OSP: Tim shared that he is seeing pretty much the same as others are reporting. He has been primarily working at Trout Creek, with a few issues regarding boater passes, but for the most part seeing lots of anglers.

Wasco County Sheriff: Lane shared that campgrounds were full, over Memorial Day holiday. They had a large number of contacts. Fly fishing seemed to be really good and folks were doing well with social distancing. Currently working on float schedule. He does have a spreadsheet (Goggle Doc.) which documents contacts made and where. He tries to keep it updated as regularly as possible. Inquired who is getting it and if any of the agencies would like to receive that to contact him or Deputy Williams.

Local Govt.: Scott there is not a lot to report. He has same COVID meetings every week with local hospital and Health Dept. Right now things look good with reports of up to 21 cases and no deaths in Wasco Co. The local hospital is prepared and his and other commissioners concerns are that people don't get to lack with social distancing and PPP's. He wants to go forward and is hoping they can go into Phase 2 for re-openings in a couple of weeks.

OPRD: Observations have been similar to what others have reported across the state. People are being pretty good with social distancing. OPRD does not required that visitors wear masks, but staff do. Hot spots right now are Smith Rock and areas along the Coast. OPRD is also worried about people slacking off with PPP and social distancing and so they are doing lots of education with their contacts and lots of signage. More parks are opening up for day use and looking at more camping be made available June 9th, but shared that on the east side of Oregon there will be a soft opening of camping starting June 5th. OPRD has been hurt economically by the virus as their funding comes from camping fees and the lottery. Currently they have a 15 million dollar shortfall which means there will not be seasonal staff except for those hired prior to COVID. OPRD will be operating at 30 % of staff capacity, looking at layoffs and there are no dollars for projects. On Monday he will hear more of what the cuts are going to look like. People in the field, such as park rangers are pretty safe, but will have more specific information by the end of next week. OPRD is giving people a 30 day notice so they can get everything in order and he worries about Salem staff so is working hard with contracted folks to get everything taken care of ahead of time. Question asked about re-openings and if that will help OPRD. Chris shared that even with re-opening there may not be enough dollars to recover. With lay-offs this will done in a phase affect and hopefully will be able to keep more staff. He shared that JR (his boss) is monitoring this closely and is trying to bring people back. Chris not sure about his position but did say that David Spangler should be able to do normal float patrols. OPRD is looking at ways to "pod up" for staff to get paired up to travel in same vehicles as well as rafts.

BLM: Tom shared that he observed much of the same as others over the Memorial holiday. Campgrounds were at capacity and things were mellow. Family pods seemed large. Restrooms were in great shape and Rangers reported that people were acting responsibly. Jeff shared that use of public lands much higher than usual, Ochocó's had historically highest use in certain areas and same with Mt. Hood. He

doesn't see the trend dropping as people are trying to simply get out. People from out of state, use is down. All launches are open as is boater passes on Rec. Gov. Receiving calls from people asking about refunds as they change their plans for floating the river, which many are from out of state. There will be no refunds since all launches are open. There will be no more refunds from this point forward due to re-opening, while he understand the concerns and inconvenience, it simply will not happen. Most of the calls have been ones for boater passes purchased in early March. SRP's, Cecilia did a great job working with Outfitters/Guides to get all their paperwork and fee's taken care of. While there are concerns regarding overpayments due to closures, we simply do not know what the full season will look like at this point, so there will not be any refunds at this time. Will have to see how the season looks like through June and then in July look at overpayments. Will respond but not quickly. Seasonal park rangers are out and BLM wants everyone to welcome them, but please do so at a safe distance. As a reminder, BLM would like it if people see things at the boat launch or day use areas and campgrounds that are not going well, please contact them. Campgrounds are open but White River and Harpham are not open to overnight use. BLM hopes people will honor closures.

Public Comment

Rob Miles from Imperial Rafting had question regarding why Harpham Flat is closed to camping, he doesn't understand why BLM manages land and yet this closure is still in place. It was explained that the site is open to day use only. Brian explained that there are no tribal properties open for any camping on and off the reservation and Harpham is private property of the Tribes. It was also explained that there currently are plenty of campsites along the river, everyone is trying to be safe and responsible. BLM has easement to provide access to the river but they cannot supersede what landowners decisions are (the Tribes). It was further explained that they have the right to request no camping. Again Rob asked why there is not full public access to this site. Jeff explained that people are responding to a national emergency and what's relevant at Harpham for camping is the need for public safety. The Tribes decide what's safe and unsafe. BLM has a solid agreement with the Tribes regarding access to the sites. Brian again shared that Harpham is private property and Tribal Council has the right regarding COVID- 19 (which the reservation is currently dealing with cases) as to the safety of tribal members, staff and the public. They operate differently and are conservative when it comes to the safety to open

areas for public use which does not happen until Tribal Council feels it is safe to do so.

Liam Ellio from Orion Expeditions. Liam needed clarification about running groups for river guide training, joining groups but not camping together. Jeff suggested he contact Cecilia with the BLM office to get clarification and address his concerns.

Final Discussion, Follow ups, Action Items:

- a. Set up next call in meeting to check on things for June 4th at 8:30 am.
- b. Issue for IIT be about the surfing and paddle board situation.
- c. Prior to the August 7th Conference call with IIT and Managers to schedule a touch base in early July to again see how things are going. Mary will send out a few dates to choose from.
- d. Tom had final comment about appreciating the partnerships and how everyone works together. He heard what the public said and shared that land management issues are complicated. There is no on and off switch especially when it comes to easement issues and understands people's frustrations.

Adjourned: 11:30 AM

Next Meetings: IIT and Managers conference follow up call – June 4th at 8:30 AM.

IIT meeting – October 16th, 10 AM – 1 PM – tentatively in Maupin