

Lower Deschutes River Managers Meeting Minutes

**May 16, 2025
10 AM -1:00 PM**

**Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Office (ODFW)
3561 Klindt Dr.
The Dalles, Or. 97058**

**ZOOM: 897 8488 7173
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CHAIR: OPRD – Scott Green

10:00 AM In attendance: Scott Green (OPRD); Jason Seals (ODFW); Scott Hege (Local Government); Steve Rogers (Wasco Sheriff Dept.); Mike Millay (BLM) Lisa Clark (BLM); Tim Schwartz (OSP); Mary Fleischmann (Facilitator); Keith Christianson (Public).

Review/Additions to Agenda/ approval of Agenda:

No additions to agenda. Scott H made MOTION to approve agenda, Lisa second. MOTION PASSED.

Approval of meeting minutes from Managers Meeting on February 7, 2025

Motion made by Scott H to approve minutes from Managers February 7th, 2025 meeting; Jason second. MOTION PASSED.

Old Business:

- How is River Guide coming along? Mike reported that seeking data and working with Nate. Things are on the backburner right now due to capacity issues. Having to take a slower pace. If folks have pictures please send, such as fish, geology, biology, etc. Katie needs GPS locations for campsites updates. There are only 2 folks on the river at this time. Many folks behind the scene that were working on the guide have retired. The GEO reference map is on track with some variabilities. Staff have changed to Department of Interior which complicates things. Jason with ODFW asked if they could help fill the gaps? BLM will get together with ODFW. Need to review public affairs but unable to do that right now.
- Mary updated contact information. Sent out to folks, and will resend when send out minutes.
- Updated, edited Charter. Group voted on approval in February 7th meeting. Good to go – two major changes were to remove OSP and OSMB from chair rotations.
- How did Maupin Dazes and the meeting at closed gate go? Agencies and Law Enforcement will be in attendance at the Deschutes Club Meeting. Purpose is for presentations on key issues, such as people trespassing and also other things the landowners want to bring to everyone's attention. This is 13 miles between locked gate and North Junction.

New Business:

- Field trip – BLM is short staffed. Scott G (OPRD) said would look into whether could join forces or possibly share on a scheduled/existing float. BLM will have a little from support after July 10th. Things are simply tight with hiring freezes and no seasonals. Looking at getting 1 river ranger hired. Do have float in cleaning of toilets, but drive-in campsites the contract for clean up expires June 20th. Staff will do their best to keep campgrounds clean, guides and outfitters said they will how they can possibly assist.

- Status of fire personnel for coming fire season. BLM not sure but anticipate above averages fire season. They are down 23% of forest staffing in Central Oregon and don't know what support they will get (feeding firefighters as an example usually require 30 staff). Simply don't know and are down 2 due to differed resignation. Scott G (OPRD) shared they has an EMS meeting in Gilliam and Sherman County regarding fire preparedness. OPRD has training sessions for assessments and fire protection plan. Scott H. shared that in Wasco County everyone is on board. They are well staffed. There are teams separate from Federal/State personnel per counties. They are prepared and fully staffed.
- Status of QR code on Kiosks? Continue to have break-in damages and stealing batteries. Other- wise things are going well. All ROKS are in place with only 3% increase in compliance. The ROKS are self-contained and there appears to be a 10 to 1 conversion of folks using them. BLM is now able to analyze lots of data. QR Codes will be in boater guide. New Kiosks have information regarding regulations, and maps of river corridor. Implement Rec.Gov for payments for permits. Mike explained that the damage to the ROKS is confined to separate pieces, it the batteries which are expensive but fortunately the company is located in Sisters so can get parts fairly easily.
- IIT – we are keeping it as a placeholder. A suggestion that BLM thought might be useful is for them to look at gaps with boater guide. Assessment for the boater guide might need some assistance. Want to keep communication with agencies and what's going on.
- Updates from Law Enforcement meeting in April – Steve reported out. Shared that one of the big issues had to do with garbage. Trying to figure out who is the victim. He believes who pays the bill is the victim, but when he talked with DA he was told to write a ticket but it will most likely get thrown out. The company who supplies the trash dumpsters is the victim – not BLM who pays the company. The community is who is filling up the dumpster. These are the dumpsters at drive-in campsites close to town. (Oak Springs and Oasis) Steve will write citations. BLM has to pay extra bill of \$1100 for the dumpsters when they fill up. Question asked if signage would help? Issue is that no way to track folks who have been warned. Tim (OSP) wondered if access to trail cameras might help? BLM has had

cameras stolen before. Over-all Law Enforcement meeting was well attended. Warm Springs law enforcement was in attendance and willing to help. Everyone will be sharing their resources this year. Priorities are PFD's compliance and boater passes, holding the public responsible and citations will happen. Equipment is all good, doing more outreach in Maupin. Operations were discussed as well. Shared email of who's doing what when it comes to floats

Round Table:

- Confederated Tribes of Warm Spring: No one in attendance.
- OSMB: No one in attendance.
- ODFW: No funding issues despite some Federal Funding. Fishing equipment is status quo. Crew stations at Sherars, Mack's Canyon and Heritage Landing. Full staff at this time. Chase will be doing weed spraying in wildlife area. Seasonal goes to end of June. Looking at campsite maintenance, improving what used to be better or creating new sites. 2 New campsites above Lockett, looking at more growth of trees. Some carsonite signs have been pulled out at campsites – possibly so others can't find those campsites? Question about steelhead this year. Jason reported that there are no predictors for the Deschutes. The prediction to Bonneville is terrible. Hard to predict as fish have been out to the ocean 1 time and returns look pretty poor. Hope do not have to close, but will have a better idea July 1 when they start and look at numbers over Bonneville, end of the month. Probability of closure pretty low. Better idea mid-July.
- Wasco Sheriff: Nothing to add
- OPRD: Near end of biennium. Staff issues as down a couple of seasonals, people are applying but don't take the job. More interviews coming up. BLM offered housing at Bake Oven if that will help. Housing is always an issue with agencies. Ordered replacement

of toilets, hopefully this biennium, in segment 4. Want to use toilet tech as they hold up longer. As far as river patrols, might be able to figure out how to help in segment 3 but tough as short on rangers. Doing fire assessments before fire ban goes into effect June 1st as following Sherman Counties policies. Can use gas and propane but that might change with the season. Fire season will stop some road trips due to fire concerns. Steve shared that he also will not be doing access roads for fire concerns. Someone shared that diesel is less risky than gas vehicles. There is lots of cheatgrass this year. Wasco Co. closes fire season on June 1st as well. There have been improvements of the showers at the Deschutes (Heritage) campgrounds. Had to re-tile due to safety concerns. Starting July 1st there will be different fee schedules. Extra vehicles overnight will pay and in the back country there will be a stay limit change. Camping only 14 days in a calendar month to camp overnight – not 14 days, move 3 days and return. Trying to figure out how to track these as begin phasing this in. At Heritage there is no day use fee.

- BLM: Kelly is new river ranger working with Katie. Got grant for Kiosk signs. Drive-in maintenance expires June 20th and staff will be cleaning campsites. Upper jetboat in segment 4 they need more staff trained, want to expand use. Mecca Flat Road needs work and submitted request for funds. Attended annual Fish Fest. Annual fire closures go into effect June 1st. Katie looking at replacing compost toilets and applied for OSMB funds. Weed spraying along river. Did share if more carsonite signs are needed they have some available. When they place orders, they do big orders. Coordinate with BLM. Looking at additional gravel at Harpham and Sandy. Continue to do overall maintenance as they can. Guides and Outfitters willing to help such as delivering toilet paper. Priest Hole campground on the John Day River made major improvements as use was increasing. They got a huge grant for the upgrades, fixed the road and there never was a fee site before. They will have fee's once the RAC can meet and make approval. Concerns with the freeze on RAC right now as can't

give a federal notice for fees and the John Day- Snake River RAC currently is unable to renew new members.

- Local Government: Scott H shared that Hunt Park in Tygh Valley just finished a 2 ½ million dollars' worth of upgrades. Lots of infrastructure. Talked about 800 mega watt Solar project going in across from Bake Oven has been proposed. Pine Grove there is a 1 giga watt solar project on 13,000 acres panels. (Shell oil funded). A lot of people are looking for campsites for workers. Scott is working on legislation for temporary housing at worksites. Problems arise with long term housing. One of the projects is down the road for a year and could go on for years. BLM shared that there are 3 solar projects using 3 – 5,000 acres. Southeast La Pine and west of Prineville (Bonanza site). Going thru normal EA process as solar projects don't follow executive order process. Coal and gas projects have a 14 – 19-day EA.
- BIA: No one in attendance
- OSP: Tim had to leave meeting- no report.

Public comment:

Keith asked if in the guide book there will be information regarding what is private vs public lands as well as Tribal lands. Mike shared that it will be in the guide and is currently in the guide. Keith shared they have had issues with trespassers. He also asked if the ROK's can be used for not only campsites, but also boater pass. Not able to at this time but hope to align in the future. The lower access road in Box Elder Canyon there continues to be issues with the culvert. It is 2/3rd full and waters flow going around the culvert. This could result in a washout in long run.

Final Discussions, Follow-up, Action Items

- NEXT MANAGERS MEETING: November 14th, 2025 at Prineville BLM
- Discussed review of charter every other 3 or 5 years.
- Everyone will figure out if there is a way to do a field trip.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 11:37 am.