



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 Plans

Hosted by High Desert Partnership and the Umatilla National Forest

Ukiah, OR / Ukiah High School Gymnasium

July 16, 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, these notes do not attempt to correct or clarify any statements made by participants.*

**Attendees** (as listed on the sign-in sheet): Marty Eisenbraun, Elaine Eisenbraun, Linda Kerr, Tommy Mentzer, Steve Beverlin, Nancy Porter, Frank Mason, Roger Ables, Ramona Creighton, John Creighton, Lori Seitz, Ron Fagg, Donna Fagg, Duane Hinkley, Robert Armbruster, Mark Barbor, Tim Campbell, Ed Farren, Lee Farren, Jack Southworth

**US Forest Service (FS) attendees:** Ian Reid, Bill Gamble, Steve Beverlin, Joani Bosworth, Karen Roganov, David Hatfield, Hugo Magana, Chris Helberg, Sabrina Stadler, Dennis Dougherty, Peter Fargo (notetaker)

**Organizations represented** (as listed on the sign-in sheet): Desolation Creek LLC, North Fork John Day Watershed Council, Ukiah City Council, Ranchers, Northwest Trail Riders Association, Forest Access for All (FAFA), City of Sumpter, Eastern Oregon ATV Association, US Forest Service

#### Facilitator Introduction – Jack Southworth, High Desert Partnership

- We are here to discuss the access portions of the draft Blue Mountains Forest Plans.
- We will go around the circle a few times, and everyone will have a chance to talk and ask questions.
- The FS planning team is here to listen as are the FS leadership and staff. We'll begin with introductions around the room; then Umatilla Forest Supervisor, Bill Gamble, will open the discussion.

#### Introductions around the circle: What's your relationship to forest?

- Need hunting access for game retrieval.
- Seeking info on forest usage.
- Don't limit access any more than it is already.
- I have a grazing permit; local resident; don't want access denied, but I think users should pay a price.
- Success is open/honest discussion; hope we take good notes and use this information to improve Forest Plans.
- From Pendleton; elk foundation volunteer; just a concerned person interested in getting first-hand info.

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- Want to hear from the public.
- Also want to hear what others have to say.
- Live in Ukiah, work here as a FS fisheries biologist.
- Here with FS; work on roads/trails; want to hear people talk.
- Want to see better access for our county; concerned about expanding wilderness; we don't need any more wilderness.
- Here with FAFA; want to see access for everybody, not just a privileged few.
- Have been away for 40 years; recently returned to La Grande. Mostly here to listen and see how we can help the FS help us.
- From Ukiah; use the forest mainly for recreation.
- Also involved with FAFA and on the Sumpter City Council; user of the Blues forests. Submitted an economic impact study, supported by City of Sumpter. Economic access is my main interest. I'm seeking assurances that we'll get something back from this process. Trust is something we all have to earn. I'd like to see the results of this meeting, so we can move forward.
- I'd like to see the FS add more trails and/or connect trails.
- Want to maintain access; happy to work with FS on trails.
- Hope to hear ideas that will help us move forward together.
- Private forester and natural resource manager; find ways to leave access open for low-impact uses.
- North Fork John Day River Council; host the Umatilla NF Collaborative. Youth crews get opportunities for employment and resource-management experience. Success for this meeting would be to find common ground, share info, so we can see the same forest through the same trees.
- Hope to hear some new ideas / solutions.
- Ukiah City Council; want continued access to traverse the mountains where I grew up. The restoration taking place is wonderful. I have a vested interest in its success.

### **Opening remarks – Bill Gamble, Acting Forest Supervisor, Umatilla NF**

- A Forest Plan is a broad framework that guides the management of the forest; much like a zoning plan in a city or county, it defines areas for different uses.
- Travel Management is a different process; it focuses on specific areas, roads, and trails. The Umatilla NF is in a different position than other forests with regard to Travel Management; we completed Subpart B in 2009. We have designated areas/roads/trails, and we have updated our Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUMs) and made them available to everyone every year since 2009.
- Back to the Forest Plans; these are much broader/strategic documents that guide management across the many uses of the forest. Last year we released a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for public comment; we received an impressive response, including a good deal of frustration.
- We are here to listen to your ideas and solutions to see how we can improve the Forest Plans. This evening we will focus on Access and Wilderness; in future meetings we will cover Grazing as well as Pace & Scale of Restoration.
- Economic development is important. We need to have access, but also mystery and mystique. There is a lot of love.

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### Panelist remarks:

- I'm interested in motorized access. Why is motorized access a good and viable use of the forests? It is the culture I grew up with. We can't let a few pinheads ruin it for the rest of us. I am older and can't hike like I used to, but I still want to get around these woods. It's important for seniors and the disabled. Now, I support protecting wildlife and wilderness areas that exist. There is still a whole world where the rest of us should be able to go. It's a necessity for many people to access those areas with vehicles. We need to have responsible use and strong enforcement/penalties for those who break the rules.
- Personally, I'm more interested in non-motorized uses, such as walking/hiking, bicycling, scouting/education. At the same time, motorized desires correlate with non-motorized desires, and I think most of us are out there for the same reasons: huckleberries, mushrooms, hunting, fishing, and just enjoying the outdoors. The benefits for me and others like me include: health, peace/quiet, wildlife viewing, and introspection. Quiet walks are important to me.
- I love hunting and fishing. I grew up here; raising my daughter here. My dad is older, and it's fun to have ATV access, but at the same time I want to get away from motorized folks. We need balance. If someone is lucky enough to draw a tag in Oregon to go hunting, it's important they have a good experience. A lot of money has gone through the FS Starkey Experimental Forest, and the plan needs to take into account all of that research in terms of hunting and also motorized access. I don't know what the woods will look like in 18 more years, but I want my kids/grandkids to enjoy them as much as I do.

### What do you think are characteristics of the access portion of the revised Forest Plan that work for everyone in this room?

- We need enough roads to allow people who are older to get out to enjoy the forest they love. ATV organizations have developed trails. I'm a horseback rider, and we're allowed to ride wherever, which prevents overuse in specific areas. In my experience, limiting horses to "equestrian trails" can lead to more impact. Also, woodcutting is already difficult to do within 300 feet of a road; it is harder if you close more roads.
- Road closures can have economic impact, including access to firewood. There can be an overuse of resources when you confine uses to certain areas, but there should be areas where you can't go with a motor. That's what wilderness areas are for; they are already set aside for this special use. The rest of the forest needs to be used by as many people as possible. We should let people disperse, so the environment can better handle animals, ATVs, etc.
- I agree we need to disperse rather than having everyone in their own little hole.
- Characteristics that I would like to see are transparency, willingness to compromise, and valid reasons. If an area is closed, there should be a good reason for it, and that should be made clear to everyone.
- The few can ruin the forest for the many. FS doesn't have enough funds to police the forest and to educate people about it. Maybe we can help raise funds. Maybe we can form a group of diverse interests and find solutions together. Then we can go to DC and tell them what the forest needs. Comprehensive special events could be successful to integrate different types of users / educate each other. We need to change the culture to accept one another's needs, provide for each other's needs, and manage the inevitable disappointments.

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- Many of the roads were built for forest-management purposes, not for long-term access. How can we leave all of the roads open for access and also maintain them? I manage timber lands, and we need to raise revenue from timber to manage other aspects of the land.
- The more you close, the more conflict you will have. What we have now is working. If you close roads, you may create conflict where there really isn't any currently. Let people spread out to minimize the impact. Although the Forest Plan doesn't technically close roads, it does say to reduce road densities in some areas. Why? That will limit access.
- It costs so much to add to the roads we have, or to change them. We need to reduce the regulations on what we can do. The FS work takes too long and way too many people to get its work done. That's expensive. I love the wilderness, but don't add any more. Adding more now may not affect us now, but over 10-30 years, more wilderness areas can have a big effect on forest uses / economy.
- Access to me means unlimited access. "Designated routes" are associated with trail closures elsewhere. I think you should take out the language on "designated routes" from the Forest Plans. Make sure the Plan doesn't lead us to eliminate access. Reducing access seems to increase FS expenses. We have 400 miles of groomed snowmobile trails outside of Sumpter, which are maintained by the snowmobile club. That's important to our community's economy and visitation.
- I actually love closed roads. We ride our horses on them, and they are wonderful for that purpose. Somebody designed the road, so we feel secure that we won't get lost; we don't have to worry about falling off a cliff. Better signage would be helpful though; often a sign will just say "closed for wildlife", but we would like more info. What distresses me is off-road use that tears up the land. I think it's a small group of people who are repeat offenders. We need to enforce the rules. Many of the roads are there for timber harvest and not intended to be there forever.
- Multiple use is a characteristic that will work for everyone. There are lots of different areas for motorized use. Others uses include habitat for fish and game. I would like a Forest Plan to identify zones where people can do what they want to do.
- I also want a plan that allows people to do what they're passionate about; want people to feel good about it; understand why it is the way it is, and can then accept it.
- I'm concerned locally about economic impacts, access, etc. But I also know that most of these rules are written back in DC. The FS doesn't have a choice right now. We the people need to change the rules, so the FS can be more responsive to local needs. Closing roads can trap people's assets (e.g., mining). Roads are important for safety – access for emergency vehicles. Need to protect habitat too.
- I hear a common thread that could work for everyone: "The ability to travel to the areas we enjoy to do the activities we enjoy." Destruction by a few pinheads is messing it up for others. More rules are not the answer. We need to encourage responsible use with more education. What we're doing now isn't working.
- Wildlife don't seem to be afraid of us when we're in a car. They do what they want to do, including deer giving birth to a fawn right next to us. Yes, you're underfunded, but look at how many of you are sitting here. I think the two plans [Forest Plan and Travel Management] need to merge into one; it is confusing to have these two different plans out there at the same time.
- I'm with the FS and here my own accord and not getting paid; it is part of how we deal with budget reductions. Many of us volunteer in the community. ATV groups have had success getting funding; yet we don't get funding to clean up after hunters (the state gets the hunting tag money). It would be great if we could consolidate to help us deal with the boundaries between the Umatilla / Wallowa-

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Whitman / Malheur NFs. That way you wouldn't have to get different permits for different forests for things like firewood collection.

- Let's keep in mind that protecting habitat helps the local economy too. If there are fish, anglers will come, buy gas, buy food, etc.
- We need to be careful not to lock people out of the forests. How do we take big gov't out of the equation in solving local problems? The FS plays an important role in our community. Can the FS register ATVs, 4-wheelers, etc.? Education of young people who show interest in forestry is important too; many members of my family retired from FS.
- Love this small community and surrounding open spaces.
- Characteristics I think are essential in a good plan are facts – science from reputable sources – information that is not driven only by the emotions of warring factions. Some areas need to be managed differently at different times. We need to keep big game on the forests – not chased off to private lands. As a current user, I also think we need maps that are more clear to everyone.
- A successful plan will be balanced, transparent, and include science as well as social values. Everyone needs to acknowledge other uses. A good plan is fair, inclusive, objective, and science-based but still accounts for local values. Forecasts call for changing economics in the Blues. Blues counties are some of poorest in the state, and we need to improve our self-reliance.
- Accessibility. A lot of local decisions are handled by local FS leaders. The problems I see are local – driven by ignorant mindsets. Ex: Trespassing, abuse. Law enforcement needs to prevent destruction that lasts forever; we should throw the book at them. Don't limit access though. It's important to have "carrying capacity" and access for fire suppression. Elk situation is difficult; I wish we could get them back on public land. They are causing a financial impact on private lands. Elk are also getting abused by horn hunters who chase them.
- I want the Forest Plan to get done; it has taken us 10 years to reach this point. We have so much in place already in terms of roads. 53% of the Umatilla NF is accessible within a quarter mile of an open road.
- Yes, we need to get it done, and get it done right.

### Summary of what the FS staff heard:

Dennis Dougherty, FS Recreation Specialist, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team:

- I heard passion, everyone's love for the forest – whatever it is we like to do out there.
- I also heard "responsibility" – that we need to manage the 1% of the population that may be making things harder for others with solid enforcement. A lot of self-policing already goes on.
- Funding is a challenge.
- Concentration of use is a concern; people don't want to move from their favorite spot if it's too crowded elsewhere. A lot of uses are compatible, so we should have room out there for people to disperse.
- There are special areas, and we need to do a better job communicating the reason for special areas/uses.
- We also need better signage/maps, so people don't worry about getting a ticket just because they don't know where to go.
- Motorized recreation is in the plan and a legitimate use.

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Sabrina Stadler, FS Team Leader, Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision:

- I'd like to take the opportunity to draw distinctions between the Forest Plans and Travel Management. We don't want to mix apples & oranges.
- The Forest Planning process provides the framework for management areas, defines desired conditions and suitable uses.
- Separately, we have to abide by the Travel Management Rule, and designated routes, trails, and areas are part of that.
- Motorized access is an important part of the Forest Plans. We also need to balance all uses as part of our multiple-use mandate.
- Maybe there are ways we can work better with states to do more cost sharing.
- Law enforcement has been a common thread across the Blues. A small number of people are damaging the resources and breaking the rules. Education is important; it starts when we're young.
- The challenge for any Forest Plan is the wide diversity of needs/wants and trying to find areas that can accommodate them. We need to be more transparent/clear. We divided General Forest into different areas – backcountry motorized and non-motorized -- and we can do a better job of explaining those areas.
- Road densities came up a lot in discussions; in the preferred alternative, we minimized the use of the "road density" language – we limited it to the wildlife corridor, which in the preferred alternative is located between the John Day wilderness areas; we focused on the where water and roads interact to the detriment of water quality; road density was also mentioned in the seasonal protections for elk where they are wintering.

Steve Beverlin, Forest Supervisor, Malheur NF:

- Let me share some things that I heard: Inclusive. Balance. Education. Science. Transparent. Aging population. Accessibility. Local values. Reduced bureaucracy. Common understanding.
- Public forest, public use, public management. Generations. Keep it the same.
- Responsible use and management.
- Ability to travel to an area for the use that we enjoy.
- Trust versus Fear. How do we revise the Plan in ways that promote trust v. fear?
- We're never going to have enough resources to do everything we would like to do; budgets are actually going down, so we need to work together.
- The Malheur NF has 1 million acres (out of 1.7 million) accessible within a quarter mile of an open road.
- Please don't lose faith in us; we are really trying to do it right. This is the first time we have done this kind of outreach after formal public comment period. We want to earn your trust.

Bill Gamble, Acting Forest Supervisor, Umatilla NF:

- Public lands are a gift. We don't have to ask permission to use them; there is no turn-style at the entrance.
- With this gift comes a unique and important responsibility for all of us. It's all of our land. Need to respect the land and all other users.
- There is recognition amongst this group about the important responsibility we have to use these lands.

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- I heard you say “don’t concentrate or confine the uses”. There are 2.4 million acres on the Wallowa-Whitman NF and 1.4 million acres on the Umatilla.
- I hear willingness to compromise, and we are going to have to be willing given the need to balance multiple uses. Positions like “all, none, or unlimited” don’t allow room for compromise.
- Education is critical; every one of us is a teacher and has a message to share. Let’s capitalize on that.
- I hear a common sentiment about the “pinheads” – those who make a habit of irresponsible use of the land. Education is a big part of that. Law enforcement is going through challenges, so we need your help.
- I heard some suggest collective efforts to inform DC; you as citizens and voters have an opportunity to tell your representatives what you need for your forests. You would like to reduce regulations to get things done; I heard that loud and clear.
- Please know that we in the FS cannot break the law; there is an intention behind each one.
- As for education, we have an opportunity to partner more with groups like Northwest ATV Riders.
- FS employees are also active members of the community. It’s not “us and them” – we are all us.
- We’re all human beings and need to treat each other with respect; then we can actually work together and solve problems.
- The work we do in the FS is for the benefit of everyone; our mandate is to “care for the land and serve people.” It’s a challenging job we have, but we embrace it. We believe these public lands are a gift that deserves our commitment.
- I heard science, and we must follow the science at the FS. We get a lot of good, local information from the Starkey Experimental Forest and Northwest Lab. We need to clearly explain why (using common sense) we make decisions. How do we keep big game on public lands? Elk are having a big impact on private land forage; we have a responsibility to put strong emphasis on that. There is a relationship between access (of all kinds) and big game. *Seasonal use areas* can help us maintain access but also meet the needs of other resources/uses.
- We need to be careful not to compromise all of the reasons that we go out there into the woods for in the first place.
- I heard “get it done”. We need to get the Forest Plans done, yes, but we also don’t want to force them on the community. That’s why we are here to listen and learn from you.

### **Closing reflections around the circle: How did you feel about tonight’s meeting? Did you feel you were heard?**

- Thank you for being open, honest, and candid with us. Thanks for letting us be open, honest, and candid with you.
- We are afraid of what’s happening to our country as a whole, and that’s spilling over onto the Forest Service.
- Keep an open dialogue like this and at the same time make sure we’re being heard. I hope we can keep this going; people are here with their hearts and souls.
- My experience tonight is that the FS has listened. I think we’re really being heard. We need to help the FS. They can’t petition Congress; we need to help them.
- This was very informative and beneficial. Everyone was heard; there was less talking by the FS. It’s about us; everyone has a use they are passionate about, and we have more in common in how we talk about our uses than we have differences.

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- I appreciated hearing from ATV and other people who like motor sports. It's my 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting like this. The common thread is that the FS listened. The perceptions that some people have becomes their reality. This approach is good because, up until now, I have heard a lot of "us v. them". Teamwork is about subordinating oneself for the benefit of the whole. Where do we want to be? What can we do to get there? This is a focus group, and it's so refreshing that FS has taken on this approach. This will definitely help with the trust factor.
- We have a good relationship with the FS. Regulations are so strict that issues are going to counties. We're afraid of what's going to happen in future and what will change in new regulations. We're lucky to have what we have. Whatever comes, we will adapt and make the best of it.
- I like this format better than other meetings. But it seems like there is plan after plan after plan. Motorized access is always compromised away, but the compromise needs to go both ways.
- Forest laws/policies seem to be focused on preventing a very few people from causing problems on the land. If we can figure out how to police ourselves, maybe we can get more access.
- Thank you to the FS and to everyone else. I feel heard. Seasonality is not the only measure of time, so consider that in temporary closures. We need to continue listening to each other.
- Keep listening; let it keep flowing; keep this momentum; there are other ways to get ideas out there.
- Information usually flows from the FS down, and I don't feel my comments really make a difference. This format allows a level of discussion that leads to a new sense of participation in my National Forest, rather than being told how to use it.
- One thing that got everyone up in arms was fear/distrust that would give FS ability to close roads wherever.
- I learn something new at every meeting. Thank you for taking the time; this is taxing.
- I'm impressed. Thank you for the respect and sharing yourselves.
- How can we get the trust back? Listen to these voices and others that are not in the room. It's possible to go both ways. Motorized uses don't always have to give ground.
- Somewhere along the way, the FS lost trust in the people, or the people lost trust in the FS. Thank you for re-investing your trust in us. We now need to show you that you've been heard and use your input to craft a plan that reflects you've been heard.
- I was concerned about what kind of environment I would find in these meetings; expected more hostility; planned to sit and sidelines and listen. This was much more productive, but these kinds of meetings raise the expectation for change and results; we will look for that. We can sit at home, or come be a voice for what we care about. Please refer to the groups represented at the meetings and comments they have provided; they have more support from members that were not present at the meeting who will expect something to happen.
- High school gyms are sacred places. Some in our society may view the Tri-Cities as a wealthy community, but places like Ukiah are wealthy too; just look at this valley. Even Frank acknowledges that Steve Beverlin may be capable of learning, so I know there is hope!
- Thank you.
- I can see our attitudes are changing, and I hope this dialogue continues.
- I'm humbled by the passion and respect for our public lands. I'm encouraged by the change in our conversation. We can be a bit smarter and more proactive in future Forest Plans. We didn't envision where motorized technology would be; we need to adapt and respond. Thank you all for your time and your help.