

**ODNRA OHV Designated Routes Working Group
MEETING NOTES
October 3, 2009
Florence Events Center – Florence, OR**

The meeting began at 9:00 A.M.

Welcome and Introductions:

Attendees – Working Group Members and Staff:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Ross Holloway	Facilitator	Sharon Stewart	SNF – ODNRA
Larry Robison	Coos County Parks Dept	Pam Gardner	SNF - CCRD
Jody Phillips	OHV Users	Scott Ryland	Organized OHV Groups
Liz Kelly	USFWS	John Carnahan	Emergency Responders
Ron Price	OPRD – State ATV Program	Mark Tilton	Community Leader
Greg Hoover	OHV Organized Groups	Doug Duchscher	OHV Guides/Outfitters
Marty Giles	Non-OHV Guide/Outfitter	Adele Dawson	General Public
Arrow Coyote	Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians	John Getz	Mushroom Pickers

Working Group members not present: Michael Cobb and Barbara Taylor

Attendees – Others:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Mike Gesner	Salem Sand Club	Richard Contreras	Self
Barbara Rowland	Self	Mike Meyers	Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue

Ross Holloway welcomed the members of the Working Group and members of the public to the first meeting of the OHV Designated Routes Working Group. Ross highlighted the Working Group selection process, and informed the Group that one member originally selected (Andy Stahl) had notified him that he was withdrawing from the Group. Barbara Taylor, representing Cape Arago Audubon Society has been selected to be on the Working Group, but was not available for today's meeting.

Sharon Stewart introduced herself to the Working Group as the FS staff person who will be attending the meetings to answer questions and coordinate the field tours. Sharon has worked for the USFS in this area since 1992. She has been a Law Enforcement Officer, the OHV Coordinator, and since 2002, the Dispersed Recreation Supervisor for the Central Coast Ranger District. Her responsibilities include hiking trails, the wilderness area, and the OHV use areas.

Ross reviewed the agenda for the day, and also other information included in the materials for today's meeting and field tour. Ross provided the Group with background information on his career with the Oregon Department of Forestry (retired in 2007) and his experience with managing public recreation and OHV use on State Forests.

Each Group member was asked to introduce themselves, describe their particular interest in the ODNRA, and share any thoughts or expectations for the Working Group process:

- Larry Robison – A 35 year employee of Coos County. County recently purchased 135 acres at Riley Ranch, which is an OHV riding area. County also has 160 acres near Tenmile Creek and another 80 acres adjacent to Riley Ranch. County has interest both as an adjacent landowner to the NRA and as a provider of OHV riding opportunities.
- Ron Price – Program Coordinator for the State ATV Program. Ron also worked on the ODNRA during his previous career with the USFS and BLM. Since 2001, the State ATV Program has contributed ~ \$42 million worth of project funding into Oregon's economy. They are concerned about helping create solutions that are workable and make good use of available ATV funds.
- Jody Phillips – Has been a user of the area since 1957. Main interest is in having rideable trails, and does not want to see a lot of existing trails closed. Trail riding is safer than open sand riding, and therefore preferable for many users. Historically, there were more extensive open sand areas in the NRA, and much has become covered with vegetation over the years.
- Liz Kelly – Works for USFWS out of Newport. She is a species recovery specialist. Primary species of interest on the NRA is Western Snowy Plover, but can also address other species if they come up. Interested in learning about what is happening on the NRA in relation to OHV use.
- Greg Hoover – Represents the interests of ~18,000 NRA users through his affiliations and business. Concerned about losing existing OHV riding areas, and would like to see any losses balanced out through additional riding areas.
- Marty Giles – Has permit for providing tours on the NRA. Is active in the Bay Area (Coos Bay) Chamber of Commerce, and a member of their Tourism Committee. Is concerned about providing for future uses of the NRA that result from changing demographics. Believes that the NRA is a unique resource that is undervalued.
- John Getz – Resident of the area since 1976, and a user of the NRA since 1977. Has been involved with mushroom picking (Matsutake) and mushroom habitat issues since the late 1980's. Described the NRA as a premiere matsutake area, producing some of the highest quality mushrooms. He expressed his appreciation for the diversity within the Working Group, and that he is hopeful the Group can come up with solutions for the co-existence of mushroom pickers and OHV users on the NRA.

- Arrow Coyote – Here representing the interest of the Tribes (Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians). Stated that pre-historic use of the NRA was very different than use today. Tribe has a desire to maintain sites in and around the NRA. Sites do appear and disappear as sand moves, making it challenging and difficult to manage them. Tribal members use the NRA today for the same range of activities as the general public.
- Scott Ryland – Has been a user of the area since 1976, and a local resident since 1992. Is a member of several organized groups. Spent 8 years serving on the ATV Grant Allocation Committee. Would like to see riding areas maintained, but also understands the need to protect other resources on the NRA. Commented that a lot of the existing vegetation is “inplanted”, not natural.
- Mark Tilton – A member of the Florence Planning Commission. Retired from the Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resource Conservation Service), where he worked on grazing issues in Eastern Oregon, and later on the Natural Resource Inventory Program.
- John Carnahan – Works as a Battalion Chief for Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, and as a Paramedic for Western Lane Ambulance. Also an instructor for ATV riders program. 22 years of service on the Dunes Patrol. Interested in assuring access for emergency services to respond within the NRA. Rescue vehicles have difficulty on tight trails.
- Adele Dawson – Resident of the area since 1980. Hikes and watches birds in the NRA.
- Doug Duchscher – Sandrail tour guide for a local company. He takes people out on the sand to see things they wouldn’t normally see. His company needs a trail system that is maintained for safety reasons, and trails of a minimum width to accommodate their tour vehicles. Concerned about additional areas being closed to trail use.

Pam Gardner, District Ranger for the Central Coast Ranger District, shared her background as a 25-year employee of the USFS. She used Powerpoint slides to provide the Group with background information on the following topics:

- History and purpose of Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area
- National Forest Planning and the Siuslaw National Forest Plan
- 1994 ODNRA Management Plan
- Management Area 10(C) purpose and management goals
- USFS Travel Management Rule and Planning process
- Role of the OHV Designated Routes Working Group
- How input from the Group will be used by USFS
- The Environmental Analysis Process
- The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)

During the travel management planning process, the Forest recognized that route designation in Management Area 10(c) of the NRA was going to be a challenge. It was decided to “set it aside” for a separate process. She commented that the Group may encounter areas within 10(c) that they feel should not have been included when the zones were created in the 1994 plan. Those

should be identified and recommendations provided. She reviewed the range of possible outcomes, from a Group consensus, to the potential for minority reports. All of the input will be valuable. The Working Group process is a component of the larger scoping process which will eventually lead to amendments to the Forest Plan. The entire process (Working Group and subsequent processes) could take 2-3 years before a decision is implemented.

During follow-up, Group members had questions about what areas were vegetated, and what was considered to be vegetation that needs to be protected. There was also a question about how much of the monitoring called for in the 94 plan has taken place, and whether any of that data can be shared with the Group.

Overview of ODNRA and Designated Routes Issue:

Ross used aerial photo displays of the NRA to show where Management Area 10(c) is, and to distinguish between three riding areas, North, Middle and South. He described the tentative plan to focus on one riding area at a time, with a field tour and meeting to discuss issues and potential recommendations for each area. Once that is accomplished, the Group will need to look at the entire area as a whole and see what the final recommendations will be.

The first area of focus will be the Middle Riding area. Prior to actually working on route recommendations for that area, Ross described the need for the Group to spend some time identifying the criteria or parameters that would be used to evaluate proposals or determine what routes should be recommended. For example, emergency responders might want to consider how a proposed route does or does not provide adequate access for their response.

During discussion, the Group asked for additional displays and information as follows: including Township, Range and Section information on displays, topographic information on displays, wetland mapping, vegetation maps, and displays that could focus the Group's attention on the areas that will be most contentious, due to existing trail use. Ross described the potential to acquire LiDAR displays of the area, which could help identify the existing network of trails, and also provide the topographic information. The Group also discussed the value of any historic photos or maps that could provide a picture of how things have changed over the years. Could also inform what may happen in the future to any trails that are designated. Group expressed an interest in having a FS Botanist to attend the next field trip to discuss some of these issues.

Ross reviewed the role of the Working Group, his role as Group Facilitator, and the ground rules for the Group. He reviewed the issue of consensus, which will be the goal, while realizing that it may not be possible on all issues or recommendations.

Public Comment:

Two individuals signed up and provided comments as follows...

Mike Gesner – Representing Salem Sand Club and is also a volunteer on the Oregon Dune Patrol. Started using the area in 1957. Was involved with original planning when NRA was created in 1972, and also the 1994 planning effort. Concerned about how much more of the area will be closed to OHV use.

Richard Contreras – Resides adjacent to the NRA, and came to the area three years ago from Southern California. Commented that the Group represents a good balance of interests to come up with a solution. Believes that we need more enforcement, especially “after hours”. Sees frequent violations of the noise buffer. He would like to see the dunes kept open for OHV use while accommodating other uses.

In response to the public comment, Pam shared information on current Law Enforcement staffing levels on the area, which are low due to recent turnover. Sharon shared information on efforts to increase bail levels for violations. The Group also commented on the noise level rules, and the reality that most OHVs are not in compliance.

Orientation Field Tour of ODNRA:

From 11:30 to 2:30, the Group participated in a FS sponsored field tour in the north riding area to provide an orientation to the ODNRA, Management Area 10(c) and some of the key issues that will affect the designated route process.

- Stop 1 – The group visited a site along a major designated route where the adjacent pine stands contain mushroom habitat. John Getz provided information on the ecology of the fungus and how disturbance of the forest floor by OHV use impacts the fungus. Several smaller, “undesigned” trails were visible at the site, as well as a sign indicating the area was closed to OHVs, which had been moved to the side to allow access to one of the trails.
- Stop 2 – The Group stopped at an overview on the edge of the open riding area, and adjacent to the noise buffer zone. The Group discussed the issue of noise levels and enforcement, and the difficulty of maintaining signs in the open sand areas. They also viewed another 10(c) area to the west, and discussed the changes in vegetation that several members have seen over the years.
- Stop 3 – After traveling a route adjacent to wetland areas, the Group stopped adjacent to a designated dispersed camp site. There was further discussion of vegetation changes, and also some discussion of issues with dispersed camping and sanitation.
- Stop 4 – The Group stopped where the Breach designated route reaches the beach. Liz Kelly described issues regarding the presence of Western Snowy Plovers in this area, and how USFWS is managing habitat for the species.
- Stop 5 – After traveling north on the beach, the Group stopped where the Chapman designated route leaves the beach. Sharon pointed out that this area contains both the

European beach grass, as well as a native beach grass. The Group had further discussions about the issue of what is natural versus human introduced vegetation in the NRA.

The Group returned from the field tour at 2:30 and reconvened to complete the meeting agenda

Wrap Up and Future Planning:

The Group provided feedback on key issues from the field tour and identified some additional information needs for future meetings and field tours (see list attached).

The Group provided input on key issues and/or sites to visit on a field tour of the Middle Riding Area in November. The following were identified:

- Visit the Banshee Hill area
- Visit the waterfall area
- Visit the portions of MA 10(C) that area adjacent to the beach

The Group discussed the proposed meeting and field tour schedule moving forward. It was agreed that the Group will meet next on November 6 and 7 in the Reedsport/Winchester Bay area. The tentative plan is for a field tour of the middle riding area on the afternoon of November 6, followed by a meeting in Winchester Bay on November 7

The Group provided feedback on their impressions of the first meeting, and ideas for improvements in the future. Key points made by Group members included...

- Several comments praising the existence of the Group and the diverse interests represented. Several commented that all the right players were at the table.
- Commented that this is a new experience and a new forum for dealing with their concerns about the NRA. Some uncertainty as to what to expect, or how to participate effectively.
- Program more time for the field tours. Timeline was too tight to allow for the amount of discussion desired, or to walk out and look at anything on foot.
- Involve the necessary resource specialists, especially on the field tours, so information can be provided and technical questions answered.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 P.M.

Information/Data Needs Requested or Identified During Meeting/Field Tour

Historic aerial photos and vegetation maps to help demonstrate how vegetation has changed in recent years, and help inform where other changes may occur.

Township, Range, Section information to facilitate comparisons with other resource databases like cultural sites.

Topographic information.

Maps showing the location of wetlands.

Information on Western Snowy Plovers, including photos for identification. (Liz Kelly agreed to provide this).

Data on levels of use and demand, now and predicted (like SCORP information).

Displays and information on surface water resources – where are features like seeps and springs, which have a much higher likelihood of proximate cultural sites.

Information on the type, frequency and location of accidents that occur.

Displays that will allow the Group to see greater detail on where trails are now, both designated and undesignated. Will help identify areas that are “in contention” versus areas where there really aren’t any trails, and no issues with routes.

Data on noise monitoring, and other monitoring identified in the 1994 plan that has occurred.

Information on the maintenance costs associated with existing designated routes.

Information on tourism revenue to local communities associated with OHV use on the NRA.