

# HOOD/WILLAMETTE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## P.L. 106-393: SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION ACT OF 2000

June 7, 2018

*Keizer Community Center, Claggett Room  
930 Chemawa Road NE  
Keizer, OR 97303*

### AGENDA

#### *Attendees:*

##### RAC Members:

Jeff Jacqua; Sandy, Oregon; Clackamas County  
Jonathan Tullis; Welches, Oregon; Clackamas County  
Patrick Davis; Wamic, Oregon; Wasco County  
Richard Ragan; Hood River, OR; Hood River County  
Will Tucker; Crabtree, Oregon; Linn County  
Neila Whitney; Mollalla, Oregon; Clackamas County  
Melanie Kate-Mason; Springfield, OR; Lane County  
Steve Wilent; Rhododendron, Oregon; Clackamas County

##### Agency Representatives:

Jennifer Wade; Mt Hood NF; Recreation & Lands Program Manager  
Clay Westbrook; Mt Hood NF  
Matt Peterson; Willamette NF; Recreation Program Manager  
Grady McMahan; Willamette NF; Detroit District Ranger  
Jenny Lippert; Willamette NF; RAC Coordinator  
Lorelei Haukness; Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area; Recreation Program  
Manager  
Jennifer Sorensen; Willamette NF; Partnership Coordinator  
Nicole Gann; Willamette NF; Middle Fork Special Uses Assistant  
Omero Torres; Willamette NF; RHLMP Staff Officer  
Jocelyn Biro, Pacific Northwest Regional Office, Fee Program Manager

General Public: none

#### *Welcome- Grady McMahan, Jenny Lippert*

- A core value of agency practice is public input. RAC is critical to those efforts.
- Forest visitation has gone up without correlation in budget. Discussion of recreation fees are important to continue maintaining quality experiences.

- RAC members represent your county and organization type. You are recommending best course of action to deciding official. For fees its Regional Forester, for SRS/Title2/PAYCO it is the Forest Supervisor.

### ***Review Charter & Operational Guidelines- Jenny Lippert***

- Legislation is Secure Rural Schools (SRS). Reauthorized with Omnibus Spending Bill in 2018. 25% off the top from Timber receipts goes back to counties. Counties (under SRS) opt to put money into one of 3 buckets (1,2,3). Title 2 funds are the ones this Hood/Willamette RAC recommends how to spend (see handout).
- Title 2 Proposal review process: Proposals come in and are reviewed, brought back to committees' counties and groups they represent for consideration. RAC meets again to make recommendations to deciding official.
  - When county gets 25% of funds- what is the process for breaking down into Title 1, 2, 3? Counties make the decision how to parse out the money to Title 1-3. Title 2 money never goes to the county; it is allocated to the Forest Service. Title 2 is voluntary reinvestment of money into forests, recreation, roads, etc. The percentage can change but has been the same for many years (for example Linn County does between 7 and 8%).
  - Does a RAC have influence on that county decision? This is not the role of the RAC. County residents should speak with their representative.
- RAC Charter:
  - Field trips are a way for the RAC to see previously recommended and approved projects.
  - Group needs to elect chairperson, term is 1 year (will do at next meeting when we have a quorum and can vote). Voting is simple majority. Voting can be in person or over phone.
  - Designated Federal Official for the Hood-Willamette RAC is Tracy Beck, Forest Supervisor for Willamette National Forest.
  - All meetings are open to the public.
  - RAC membership is meant to represent a wide swath of community and interests. The more diverse the better. Currently soliciting additional members: 3 openings.
  - Ethics- any real or perceived ethical conflict with a project member needs to recuse themselves from voting on that project. Everyone should fill in and send ethics worksheets to Jenny Lippert.
  - The Hood Willamette RAC geographic jurisdiction: Wasco, Hood River, Multnomah, Clackamas Counties (Mt Hood NF and Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area), Marion, Linn, Lane and Douglas Counties (Willamette NF)
  - Job of chairperson is to communicate with RAC coordinator. Chairperson runs the RAC meeting, RAC coordinator facilitates (gets room, provides data and analysis, . Chairperson signs/approves final RAC project recommendations with Deciding Official (Forest Supervisor or Columbia River Gorge Area Manager)
  - Attendance to hold a meeting is 8 out of 15 members- needed for meeting. Voting quorum requires 3 of 5 representatives from each group (A, B, C), which demonstrates a balanced representation of the public. We use Roberts rule of order.
  - FY17 money has been released to the states, but not yet at federal level. Wont meet again until that happens. Once money gets to the forest we'll solicit for proposals (2 month window). Jenny will resend the funding spreadsheet with all pages.
  - Frequency of meetings- usually 2/year plus field trip.

- Meet initially to view presentations on proposals; RAC gets 4-6 weeks to review with counties. Usually each county group meets separately to bring a recommendation to this RAC for projects in their area.
  - Come back together to vote. (2-3 meetings total)
- Because so little of Willamette NF is in Douglas County, we've agreed not to have RAC members from that County. The adjacent Lane RAC members will review and propose projects for Douglas.

***Rec fee orientation- Joselyn Biro; R6 Recreation Fee Program Manager***

- RAC Charter originally created for Title 2 funds, now can be used for Rec RAC/Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) efforts.
- REA authorized through 9/30/2019. USFS can't charge entrance fees - only recreation fees. Standard amenity fees (day use), expanded amenity fees (overnight, boat launches, etc. direct benefit to users), and special recreation permits (wilderness, rivers, etc.).
- 95% REA fees are reinvested in fee sites where collected
- Role of the RAC: Make recommendations on implementing or eliminating recreation fees, implementing fee level changes. RAC cannot make recommendations for concessionaire or contracted fees, commercial and group special use permits.
- Are we doing adequate public involvement? RAC helps judge.
- Recreation RACs have specific makeup requirements based on interest areas.
- Group discussion on scope of work/influence for RAC versus REC RAC. Concerns about making recommendations for REC RAC- these seem more complex and related to policy decisions.
  - What is the decision space for the Rec RAC versus SRS RAC? Rec RAC charter is very narrow regarding review & recommending fee proposals. There is no authority to recommend changes to policy. There are strong sideboards in place and significant work is done in advance by USFS staff in designing and developing the fee proposals to begin with. The recommending space is not as loose or broad as it may seem at first. Group felt more comfortable after understanding these required early scoping requirements.

***Columbia River Gorge NSA New Fee Proposal for Sandy River Delta Trailhead***

- Overview of area. Increasingly popular as Portland public spaces become more restrictive for dog owners. USFS has invested money into development of parking lot and facilities that support recreation use. Bonneville Power Association (BPA) invested mitigation money into restoration. Excellent engagement with the public- location near Portland has resulted in high level of partner and volunteer involvement in stewardship events at the site.
- Proposed fee is \$5/vehicle/day. Passes would be available from local vendors and for online purchase through yourpassnow.com. Much of the recreation traffic here is repeat and would likely use NW forest pass in lieu of a daily fee. Due to safety concerns, the FS would not provide an onsite cash payment option. May research options for paying with a credit card on-site.
- Columbia River Gorge NSA currently has a good mix of fee and non-fee sites. Some of our most popular sites, such as Multnomah Falls, are free to the visiting public.

- Fees support facility operation and maintenance, trails maintenance and repair efforts, field ranger program and interpretive programming, and heavy facility replacement/repair (roof replacements, bridge work, etc.). Utilize fee dollars to leverage external dollars (ex: FLAP dollars).
- Public involvement: multifaceted. Results overview (see summary handout). Approximately 65 percent of written comments were in support of fee proposal.
- Discussion:
  - Often it all comes down to toilets- is the current toilet capacity sufficient? Yes adequate.
  - Parking- lots of overflow parking is an issue. Efforts are underway to connect location with other trails to provide options in getting to the site.
  - No iron rangers- represents a safety concern. Considering a mobile booth at entrance.
  - Are there discussions about limiting access because of capacity? No, but parking is a limiting factor. Proximity to the highway should infer the need for large RVs.
  - The Your Pass Now site warns folks that buying a pass doesn't guarantee a parking spot. Discussion on semantics- fees are taxes, parking versus non-parking fees, etc. Managers are doing their best with the tools in place.
  - Is there a committee that will help ensure these fees collected get used in a good way? Not formally but there was early discussion with partners on how funds would be used. REA is specific in what collected fees can be used for. Will continue to engage partners in that discussion.
  - Lorelei will create a 1-page overview of this proposal. She does not have good use numbers at this point but she'll do her best with the data available.

### ***WNF fee proposals***

- Review handout for specifics on each site.
- Overview of funding for recreation sites: Mix of appropriated funding, recreation fee revenues, volunteer and partnership contributions – actual mix varies by site.
- Fee dollars stay local. Even with these sources, keeping up is a challenge. Some sites need servicing 2-3 times/day.
- Fee process- lots of vetting to get to a proposal before even approaching the public. Includes a national fee development tool, comparables, vetting by RO and WO. Then given permission to go to the public.
  - For comparison, Linn County considers fee hikes annually. Federal process is broken when it takes 3-4 years to implement a new fee; will never keep up with actual costs. This one is unique, hit several hurdles- RAC committee in place, etc. Can take as little as a year to get in place.
  - Most public comments came via email from rentals and was supportive- much fewer from non-rental emails. Is this normal? It depends on where the fee is being proposed. Specific type of fee is different than small increase. People are more likely to complain than comment in favor.
  - Revisit REC RAC decision space- different than Title 2 recommendations.
- Overview of public outreach done in 2016.

- Proposed Fee increases:
  - Group campgrounds- have been no fee increases at most sites in near a decade. Therefore the percent increase feels large. Review of specific proposals by campground. These are expanded amenity fees, some amenities not required to be provided (water). These fees are lower than if amenities like water were included. Differences between sites are based in part on capacity, quality of sites, proximity to recreation places, desirability. Also consider how large the change it (based on ability to make past changes).
    - Could this group suggest making fees more similar such that it's easier to take back to their constituents? Able to be ranked based on amenities and qualitative characteristics. Potential to be perceived as less valuable if cheaper?
  - Cabins & lookout rentals- very unique opportunities and experiences, more expensive but also more expensive to maintain. Similar to campgrounds amenities vary based on site.
    - Assuming fees are defensible, why not just adjust rates for inflation... 3% per year and move on. Inflation is considered in these proposals.
    - Proposed amenities (twinkly lights, clothing racks and wine glasses) are available for discussion, not committing but may be important to certain users.
    - Review specific fee proposals. General support for these fees.
  - Campgrounds- most on WNF are managed by concessionaires: Linn County and AL&L. Campgrounds under USFS management and with fee proposals in front of the RAC tend to be less developed than concessionaire campgrounds, most have no water. This is different than free dispersed camping across the forest.
    - Extra vehicle fee- consistent across the forest (\$6). Rationale- additional vehicles cause more damage. Consistency with OR state parks, county sites, BLM fees. Capacity issues are less likely with fewer vehicles. Double sites account for an additional vehicle within the price. More cost effective to use single site with extra parking than jump to a group site.
    - General support for the \$6/extra vehicle.
    - Are these new fees allowing us to meet maintenance costs? Not usually. Is the void filled with other funding sources? In some cases no. Knowing this would help the group make recommendations (even general percentage), and it is not easily available.
    - These fees go into one account, can be used between several sites; all the sites support one another. Deferred maintenance is based on facilities at the site, age of the site, accuracy of the database that tracks it, etc. Fees must be acceptable to a WIDE swath of the public, not just the wealthy end.
    - How to tell if people are being priced out? Perhaps not be able to be seen by just occupancy rates- population is growing; are we excluding based on income? What is our obligation to provide equity? Fees are necessary to provide quality experiences, and balanced with other opportunities (dispersed free, etc.). We will nearly always be cheaper than concessioned sites.
    - Is USFS responsible for increasing camping opportunities overall? Or shut facilities down if we cannot maintain them? Currently managers are trying to strike a balance.

- New fee sites- never before had a fee.
  - Campgrounds-
    - Alder Springs: discrepancy between trailhead (has fees) verses campground (no fees currently) even though visitors using same amenities.
    - Why is Alder Springs cheaper than Indigo Campground? You have to drive up the road to pay. Comment: Likely only makes us feel good (no signage to this point). Likely address at next go-around.
    - General support for these proposed fees.
    - Are there any seasonal fee changes? Don't know off hand. Potential liability issues when people use sites when closed - usually sites closed with gates.
    - Signage suggestion- "help us to help you".
  - Day Use Sites-
    - All recreation passes are accepted at these sites, or pay the standard day use fee of \$5/vehicle/day.
    - Some perspective that these should remain free and interpretive information should be improved.
    - Suggestion that Hackleman specifically should remain free. Type of use matters- quick stop with kids, use restroom and short walk before moving on. These are short loops, not areas where you could spend significant time.
    - Hardesty and McCredie more acceptable to incur fees.
    - If kid friendly, keep it fee free.
    - When passes are sold- how is the money kept local? 95% of funds are returned to the forest where the pass was purchased, not where its used. This is consistent when purchased at businesses.
    - Is money actually getting to the ground? See 2017 accomplishments report. Is their reinvestment proportional to specific site use? Not necessarily. Credibility of program suffers when fees are put into place and location stays poor quality.
    - If no fees approved for a given site then no fee dollars can be utilized to support that site.
    - General support for the professional's perspective.

### *Closing and Next Steps*

- RAC committee members should take this info back to constituents. Come to next meeting ready to vote.
- Next meeting likely in Fall, working on member recruitment.
- Jennifer Lippert will be transitioning RAC coordination to Jennifer Sorensen; will happen slowly over several months.