for the greatest good

HIGH DESERT PARTNERSHIP

Meeting Notes

BLUE MOUNTAINS
FOREST PLAN REVISION - 2015
Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests

Public Workshop on Access and the Blue Mountains Forest Plans
Hosted by the High Desert Partnership and Umatilla National Forest
Clarkston, WA / Asotin County Fairgrounds
July 8, 2015

These notes reflect the best efforts of notetakers to capture the discussion of meeting participants, but in no way are these notes a word-for-word transcript as the notetakers may have unintentionally missed some statements or dialogue.

Attendees (as listed on the sign-in sheet): Paul Wik, Jeremy Kinzer, Richard Slaybaugh, Corky Slaybaugh, Brian Shinn, Jim Fuller, Dan Long, John Maguire, Larry Scoggin, Lenna Scoggin, Brenda King, Tyler King, Mike Miraglio, Mike Cloke, Edward Johnson, Mathew Dillard, Mike Dill, Pete Charriere, Samee Charriere, Max Roberts, Sandra Roberts, Lenny Frasure, Mark Heuett, Roger Schmitt, Brian Reid, Ron Landrus, Eddy Ochoa.

US Forest Service (FS) attendees: Kevin Martin, Joani Bosworth, Monte Fujishin, Mike Rassbach, Brad Cooper, Randy Pritchett, David Hatfield, Larry Randall, Chuck Oliver, Sabrina Stadler, Dennis Dougherty, Peter Fargo

Organizations represented: Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Supreme Power Sports, Stentz Springs Cabins, Asotin County, Asotin County Commissioner, Asotin County Sportsman Association, Wenaha Game Association, Lewis and Clark ATV Club, 3% of Idaho, Dick Ledgerwood & Son, FS, and others

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Introduction – Jack Southworth, Facilitator, High Desert Partnership: We are here to discuss the access portion of the Blue Mountains Forest Plans; everyone gets a chance to talk and ask questions of the FS.

Opening remarks – Kevin Martin, Umatilla NF Supervisor:

- Thank you to everyone for coming. Thank you to Jack and HDP.
- We are here to address the Blue Mountains Forest Plans, and hopefully through these discussions we'll end up with a better Plan.
- We have scheduled a series of meetings on access and other topics; we want to hear from folks again; we got a lot of negative comments last year; maybe we didn't hear well enough / didn't pay enough attention.
- Access is one of the issues we wanted to revisit – the whole gamut of access interests.
- We at the FS want to hear from you. We would also like you to speak with each other and learn from each other.

- A Forest Plan is a strategic document. It's like zoning for a county or city. We are not making local, site-specific decisions in the Plan.
- Why do we do planning? National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires a new Plan every 15 years. We have a lot of new science and information since the last plan, so it's time for an update.
- We want your ideas and creative solutions to help improve the draft Plan.
- Access is the initial engagement. Later we'll come back about the Pace/Scale of Restoration.
- We will keep people informed / engaged about where we are in the process.

Introductions around the circle: Who are you? Where are you from? What would make this a successful meeting?

- Emergency Manager for Asotin County. We've been doing this (planning) for too long. The environmentalists and others don't like what we did before, so here we are again.
- I like to ATV, have a cabin above Pomeroy; want to see continued access
- 3% of Idaho; Constitutional group standing up for rights; want to be sure public lands remain public
- From Clarkston, outdoorsman, horseman; wants to stay in tune with what's going on.
- From Pomeroy; concerned citizens; staying on top of these issues to help everyone out.
- Umatilla NF recreation staff officer
- Asotin County Association, looking for fair closures on the roads, want access during hunting
- I want to ride my 4-wheeler up in the Blue Mountains.
- Deputy Forest Supervisor, Wallowa-Whitman NF
- Here because I saw the blip in the paper
- Here to close the gap and improve communication
- My main concern is access for hunters and fishermen; make sure critical habitat is not overrun by too much access, including fisheries.
- Sportsman, avid over-snow vehicle (OSV) user; also dual sport motorcycle
- OSV / ATV user; interested in broad access – not narrowly defined
- Umatilla NF District Ranger out of Walla Walla
- District wildlife biologist for WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife; I work on elk; represent science; if we want to keep elk and other wildlife on the Blues, we need to think carefully about road access; also private agricultural damage
- Natural Resources Staff Officer, Umatilla NF
- District Ranger out of Pomeroy
- Asotin County Commissioner; started logging as a kid; here to listen and hopes to avoid shutting roads down unnecessarily.
- Asotin County Commissioner; what citizens have to say and users of forest.
- Staffer for Congressional Representative; want more access / economic activity; I know Kevin (FS) has done his best.
- Lewis & Clark ATV Club; roads have closed and we didn't understand why; need better communication between FS and user groups. Ensure horse access.
- Blue Mountain Audubon Society. Access, yes, but we also need to protect habitat. Would like to see more educated stewardship among forest users.
- Powersports enthusiast

- Cattle rancher and FS permittee. Access is critical to what we do; want to learn more about how the Forest Plan will affect us.
- 4-wheel; want to learn about the potential closure of Hogback Rd.
- 4-wheeler and OSV
- Concerned about access; closing and ripping out roads; must walk
- FS Blue Mountains Forest Plan Revision Team
- Born and raised here. It used to be that we rode a horse or walked. Would like to see FS adapt to new things. FS is here to serve public and take care of public property. Keep all land open to multiple uses; don't be a mouthpiece for environmental groups. Manage all uses; should not be a land of no use.
- All season access
- Asotin County, Lewis & Clark ATV Club; keep in mind the economic benefits of ATV access
- Environmental Coordinator for Umatilla NF
- Umatilla NF, Pomeroy Ranger District

Panelist Remarks:

- Disheartened to see no tribal representatives here; they bring an important perspective. I want kids to have the same fun that I got to have with my father and grandfather. I love to snowmobile, etc. I'm older now, and my health isn't what it used to be. I would still like to access the forest. If it's walking and horse-riding only, that's limited access for many disabled people. I'd like to see stiff enforcement of alcohol and drugs, and for people damaging sensitive habitats. Some people have been damaging our property with 4-wheelers on soft mud; they damage fences and leave gates open. We can use common sense on snowmobiling -- at least a foot of snow before grooming. I dislike silent areas; machines have less pollution and less noise than ever with 4-stroke and 2-stroke technology (new BMW dual sport bike is very quiet). But there should be stiff enforcement against people with no noise control. There should be no more Wilderness Areas, but there should be respect for what's designated Wilderness; punish those who break the rules. There should be fixed rules and consistent enforcement for ATVs, so people aren't afraid of getting tickets for being in the wrong place. We contribute to the local economy; grooming trails costs money, and our fee dollars pay for grooming (XC skiers use the grooming too). I dislike that FS has its own police department. Why not give that to the county? Local citations and local court dates would be better than going all the way to Spokane for court.

- I have worked as a field biologist on every FS Ranger District on the Umatilla. I have seen the damage done by some individuals. I now represent the Audubon Society, which has had a Blue Mountains chapter since 1972. We are about solutions, not lawsuits. We have always been a part of collaboration, because our members are from the community. I am extremely concerned about habitat. For example, invasive weeds like cheat grass / knapweed are brought up from the valley by vehicles and hay. Other invasive species such as the Red Fox and Virginia Possum take a toll on birds and other mammals. We need to be more aware of what we're doing. Trespassing is also a problem on private property. Federal lands belong to everyone in this nation; everyone who pays taxes owns the property. We need to respect the land; it is not a right to destroy it. Wet areas, if disturbed, can be scarred forever. Many of the meadows have just thin Lithosol soils; if we use them as racetracks, we destroy them. Some good news is that new, previously unknown plant species have been discovered in the Blues. This is really exciting and holds great potential for medicines and other uses;

let's protect these rare plants. Personally, I like to have silent areas where I can hear the wildlife, but Audubon Society is not here to stress road closures or decibel levels. We do care about habitat for the wildlife. The forests are islands surrounded by agriculture; these are the only places left for threatened and endangered species.

- An aside from another participant: I saw a dirt-covered rig coming out of the forest. Where did they go to find all of that mud this time of year? I turned them into the FS but didn't hear back from the FS about what happened. We all need to speak up.

- I represent Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. I'm a sportsman, so healthy habitats are important to me. If invasive weeds move in, the animals lose their habitat. We need to collaborate; talk in groups; use the forests legally. FS focuses on science, and that's important. They have good science on the effects of 4-wheelers in elk habitat. Take a look at the information coming out of the Starkey Experimental Forest and Research Station in La Grande, OR. The FS hires great scientists; we all fund their work with taxpayer dollars, so we should pay attention to the results. Another area of interest/concern for me is the Snake River / Columbia River basins; 10,000 square miles drain into these rivers, so it's all connected. The Columbia River Treaty with Canada and tribes should bring us more water to keep the salmon alive. It's all about the water. There are many kinds of access -- ATVs, horses, snowmobiles, etc.-- all have a place. I'm a bow hunter, and I can't walk as far as I used to, so now I go somewhere else. That's okay. 4-wheelers can displace the game I'm hunting, so we need to follow the travel plan. We need to follow the rules. Often OSV use areas are mandated by court order. Wilderness is out of the question. We need to collaborate; that means working with each other and the FS. Habitat/Backcountry Horsemen/Biologists/ATV users – we can all work together. For example, good collaboration on the Clearwater; ATVs around Wallace, ID are a boost to the economy; we should look at ways to do business together. When we meet, we should make sure to include a FS biologist, so we can understand the science/truth. Talk to the Forest Supervisor and others to find common ground.

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What are the characteristics of an access plan for Umatilla that works for everyone in the room?

Enjoy horse riding in wilderness areas. Also have a 4-wheeler for other areas. Congress established wilderness, so we should leave it alone. We don't need more wilderness; there is enough to cover in a lifetime. We do need more law enforcement officers to make sure people abide by the rules.

Honestly, I was probably one of those kids out there mudding. Now I know better; don't want to tear up the land – love these forests. Want to load my 4-wheeler on my truck and get out to areas that other people can't. I'm trying to get away from people. If I want to go deeper, which trails can I take to keep away from people who may be bothered? I'd like to see more well-marked trails with different difficulty levels, so I know where to go and what to expect. Better trail definition would help. Which users should go where?

I'm a disabled veteran, so a 4-wheeler is how I get around. I fought for the right to enjoy these trails; I would like to see more trails. But if you are tearing up the land, you should pay the price; need more enforcement for those breaking the rules. Law enforcement should be county led, not NF.

I'd like to see better signage / maps; consider rotating areas for different uses (motor v. quiet), so everyone can enjoy them at different times of the year, or in different years.

Providing more strategic access for ATVs prevents illegal use. Having multiple uses on certain roads can be really tough. Enforcement: We only have one officer covering a huge area. Having people report misuse is helpful to the FS.

Don't see a need to close roads. Roads lead to trailheads. Rules are confusing; need to be clearer.

The trail system is confusing. More trails may lead to less people doing the wrong thing. I love wilderness but would like to see better parking areas at the trailheads.

Change is challenge. Education is key. WA state parks has an educational course for boaters. To help prevent long-term damage, maybe we can implement an education system tied to permits for people who want to access FS roads/trails.

I agree. Would like to see FS reach out to high schools to educate kids about 4-wheelers, ATVs, respect for the land, leave no trace. Parents don't always teach well. A good plan is something that works for everyone. Common sense. Elk/deer are not in the wilderness; they are in the private lands, because private landowners take care of their ground. There will always be an interest group that may sue; don't let that get in the way of common sense. Let's build/open more trails, so more people can use the Forest.

Agrees with everything just said. It boils down to responsible shared use. I don't want a licensing program though for vehicles less than 35 mph.

Want to see common ground between habitat, wildlife, and users. Education is important. Administrative Use Permits allow access for grazing and forest management. A lot of people go past locked gates for hiking/biking, so more trails would be helpful, plus more reporting. We shouldn't tear out our roads.

More signs would help. I hope roads aren't torn out, because they are needed for fire; also needed for cattle. Common sense – can work hand-in-hand with science. We need to report when we see misuse. We ask a lot of one law enforcement officer.

I sell dirt bikes, side-by-sides, etc. More education is essential. I don't want my customers to feel stigmatized. I think we can find common ground.

This is a long-term, lifetime commitment. What we're talking about is a long-term strategy. Also long-term, cumulative impacts. Let's do something sustainable – that will last. There is a massive mud hole on Road 66 at the headwaters of Mill Creek. That is the water source for the City of Walla Walla; we need to think sustainably.

Yes, ATVs can do damage; trucks can do even more with big tires. It happens on public and private land. We need better enforcement. FS and other agencies / counties need to work together to enforce the rules.

FS worked with County and Congressionals to develop their motorized plans. The conservation community wasn't against the Plan; they just didn't think the FS would enforce it. We're not going to get funding to do things people would like *others* to do. We need to do things as local citizens that we need for ourselves.

We can't get everyone to access every inch of the forest. We're not getting environmental input in these meetings, but I'm frustrated that somehow the plans come back with strong environmental input. We deserve access as much as the animals do.

Access and enforcement are the two themes I'm hearing. 2% of people are making things harder for everyone else. They aren't just teenagers; they are also adults. Let's not forget the fire damage. We need a plan that we can also enforce. We need access, but we need to plan ahead for the 2% of population that screws it up for others. We need a good system that's clearly defined. We don't have a lack of roads right now – just a lack of open roads. We need a clearer picture of roads that can be used; we also need roads for fire / system access.

We need to identify where/when elk need to be left alone (e.g., where they need cover). Need to be willing to yield for wildlife. In the past, we built roads up streambeds; we need to not encourage people to drive through the water to protect stream habitat for listed fish. We can also look at the road system for redundancy.

A good plan is easily understood and easily disseminated. Once you read it, you understand what the sideboards are and how decisions are made. People should understand the rationale.

Why are we here again? If it's not wilderness, it should be okay to access. I hate to see roads obliterated. Without access for foresters, we won't have any forestry. There are more ATV roads in Idaho (e.g., Coeur d'Alene). WA Department of Fish & Wildlife officers are armed to the teeth. Enforcement is good, but don't scare people. Plan also needs to make economic sense.

Everyone's values need to be incorporated; science also needs to be incorporated (e.g., elk, long-term ecosystem health). We can do a better job of helping people comment on projects; the State could collaborate more. Plan needs to be adaptable as science / uses change.

Not everyone's needs will be met, but this is an opportunity. Destructive behaviors are not just ATVs; there is a wide range of destructive behaviors. We can all help with that. Report abuse to the FS.

I was taught to respect the land and others. Why is it so hard for everyone to get along? With access comes with accountability. We need enforcement, even if it's peer groups. I licensed my snowmobile; I pay for discovery pass and snow park fees. Limiting access can create chokepoints; those impacts can be irreversible.

The North-South Trail pushed me out of my favorite campground. Lots of people are in there with different/conflicting uses.

Some people have diseases/disabilities; I have MS. The plan needs to consider disabled folks. Choke areas are a problem. The Forest Service should look at Cooperatives for help. Local enforcement is best. Asotin and Garfield Counties should lead enforcement efforts. Also use common sense: If an area can be opened sooner because of an earlier season, why wait to open it? Don't make everyone wait because of an arbitrary date.

The Plan needs to be fair and balanced.

Great to see agreement on the Plan – enforcement, education, plan is understandable so people know what they can do – not just what they cannot do.

I'm 62 and disabled, and I want access to enjoy the forests on my 4-wheeler. We don't need new trails; just open the gates and enforce the rules.

I educate youth hunters; all you can do is plant the seed. Parenting is important. I want people to be able to keep hunting on NFs. If you can drive a car on the FS road, you should be able to drive an ATV there too. Camping should include established and unestablished. Don't close down dispersed campsites; don't make people pay for them.

A plan that works for everyone is just a dream. Not everyone will be happy. Specific areas where ATVs can go would be helpful – e.g., long one-way loops. FS does a great job, but there are some areas for improvement.

What's reasonable? Management areas for different uses. Motorized in some areas, non-motorized in others. Let's look at BIG opportunities where you can go ride for a day. High quality. Safety. Affordability. We need to be able to afford to maintain routes to a minimum safety standard. Also to protect the resource. If we want <u>more</u> opportunity on the forests, the FS cannot do it alone; we need local partners to help maintain the roads and trails.

As a senior citizen, I want to access roads and campsites.

You would have more money for enforcement if you could tax recreational vehicles and timber sales.

Current enforcement can be intimidating; we need a less military look and more "conservation officer" look.

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Wrap up of what the FS staff heard

Dennis, FS Recreation Specialist: I heard themes such as…

- Enforcement
- Clear, understandable plan and maps
- Common sense paired with good science
- Idaho ATV program may be a good template for management

- Increase trail construction
- Long-term effects and impacts: plan is aspirational
    - Things will change (recreation, landscape)
    - Multiple uses: balance, most complex natural resource / social / economic challenge
- Disabled / handicapped access

Sabrina, FS Team Leader, Blue Mountains Forest Plans: Would like to put comments in the context of the Blue Mountains Forest Plans…

- The Forest Plan is not a panacea, but the Desired Conditions in the Plans consider the full "recreation opportunity spectrum" – roads and trails, elk, for hunting/fishing, dispersed recreation and camping, fuel reduction / grazing
- In the future, Management Areas will guide project-level work, and we are trying to match Management Areas as much as possible to existing uses (e.g., huckleberrying and mushrooming), and to the existing road system.
- I heard a desire to develop loop opportunities; if you are looking for access in places where you don't already have it, the best place to start is to speak with your District Ranger. The opportunity is there to work with District Rangers to make adjustments to the Motor Vehicle Use Maps.
- We also have an opportunity to work together to improve law enforcement; some suggested a "Forest Watch" like Neighborhood Watch.

Kevin Martin, Supervisor, Umatilla National Forest: I heard…

- A great deal of diversity, and willingness to work together
- Thank you for being willing to work with us; we would love to have your help on trails, etc.
- I heard that the Forest Plan need to make common sense; be adaptable; be understandable
- Management areas, similar to zoning: Maybe we don't need quite so many; maybe it can be simpler.

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Final feedback around the circle. How did you feel about the meeting? Did you feel you were heard?

I learned a lot; hope you can take all of these comments and ideas and come up with a good plan.

Not a lot of conflict toward individuals in the FS, but nothing gets done. How long has Forest Plan been in works? Who is responsible for getting this thing done?

FS has a lot of people to listen to. We're the people in your Districts. We're the true environmentalists. Care for the land, fish, elk, etc. We don't need any more wilderness. We have enough, and there is no game there. Please don't make the Forest more restrictive. Manage for multiple uses; if you include people, you will have the support of the community. Don't tear out the roads.

Good meeting; good things said. Need enforcement.

Clean up the forest; get biomass out; get grass out. It would help to manage fires. Do better to manage forests.

I feel I was heard. We all love the forests; that is why we're here. Let's not let ourselves feel coddled by this meeting; let's get together and get things done.

We need to better understand the management areas that Sabrina mentioned; take a closer look at them.

We have an NRAC (Natural Resource Advisory Committee). Let's use it. Get our timber taxes back, so we can fund more projects. We also need to address our concerns in the political ball field.

Enjoyed the meeting.

Good dialogue, and we should continue doing this to break down stereotypes. We can have access while caring for the land and being accountable.

At first I wasn't sure about the circle, but this was a good dialogue. Everyone was heard and not cut off due to time constraints. Thank you to the FS.

I got a lot out of it. FS does a good job, and I heard good input tonight.

Appreciate everyone who shared.

Glad I came; just saw a blip in the paper.

Forests belong to the people; FS manages in trust; the way we manage the FS is through elected officials. Congress is underfunding FS; that will not change soon. Some even want to privatize or sell off forest lands. The FS is doing the best it can.

Thanks to FS for having us and bringing cookies. Was I heard, yes, but my concern is who's above you, and who's above you? My final concern is not all stakeholders came. OSVs can damage fences. We need to wash our vehicles to avoid spreading weed seeds.

Thank you -- thoughtful and wise Washington citizens.

Heard a lot of things that the FS team has to digest. Some address the Forest Plans and others are better to discuss with District Rangers. We'll get back to you with what you shared.

Will take this feedback and reflect with other FS staff.

Thank you to the FS. It's great to have time to speak with FS directly. I care about the forests and need to see you are listening. Monte (FS District Ranger, Pomeroy District) does a good job communicating, and I appreciate the willingness to listen. Now, actions speak louder than words.

Thank you. It's nice to be heard. This kind of dialogue is unusual. I went to a BLM meeting where people couldn't even ask questions.

FS: Thanks for taking the time to meet; it is really refreshing to hear all of this info. Please let us know how we can best keep in touch; envelopes are on the sign-in table with postage paid. Take a copy of the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) handout. Visit us online, please like us on Facebook, and let's keep in touch.

I appreciate FS for the forum, and I'm excited to see how many citizens showed up; this is a huge group compared to most; provided civil comments; willing to sit down and talk.

We were heard, but were we listened to? Let's see how the Plan comes out. Impressed that everyone was thoughtful and civil.