

**ODNRA OHV Designated Routes Working Group  
MEETING NOTES  
June 26, 2010  
Florence Events Center**

**Introduction:**

The meeting convened at the Florence Events Center at 8:40 A.M. Working Group members and staff introduced themselves.

Attendees – Working Group Members and Staff:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Ross Holloway	Facilitator	Sharon Stewart	SNF – ODNRA
Larry Robison	Coos County Parks Dept	Greg Hoover	OHV Users
Adele Dawson	Area Birders and Lane County Audubon	Scott Ryland	Organized OHV Groups
Liz Kelly	USFWS	Jody Phillips	OHV Users
John Carnahan	Emergency Responders	Mark Tilton	Community Leader
John Getz	Mushroom Pickers	Marty Giles	Non-OHV Guides and Outfitters
Mike Harvey	SNF – Recreation Staff		

Working Group members not present: Barbara Taylor, Doug Duchscher, Arrow Coyote and Ron Price

Attendees – Others:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Lance Rowland	Self	Barbara Rowland	Self
Fritz Gross	Oregon Dunes KOA	Richard Contreras	Self
Kevin Studer	Self	Kathy Shamey	Homeowners
Brandon Bretl	OHV User	Mike Myers	Siuslaw Fire and Rescue
Kate Bretl	OHV User	Rob Shuck	Self
Delmar Clark	OHV User	Ed Costa	OHV User
Jack Davis	Local Resident	Randy and Meri Collins	Self
Jane Meyer	Local Resident	Dan Means	Self
Gary Armstrong	Self	Paul Czemerys	Self
Dan Ervin	OHV User	Harlen Springer	Self
Richard Contreras	Self	Roger Rolon	SWR ATV Club
Edwin Johnson	Self	Mitch	Noise Free Florence
Steve Newman	Local Resident		

Ross Holloway reviewed the logistics and the agenda for the day. He explained that this was the sixth meeting of the Working Group, and that the process was being extended, with two additional meetings of the group to be held in the fall. He described the plan for public comment, and indicated that there would be an opportunity at 2:30.

**Discussion and Q&A on 1994 ODNRA Management Plan:**

Mike Harvey, Siuslaw National Forest Recreation Staff Officer provided the group with an overview of the planning process that created the 1994 ODNRA Management Plan. He summarized the key laws that govern management of OHV use on public lands, including a 1972 Executive Order, Forest Service regulations (CFR 295) adopted to implement the executive order, and the 1972 legislation that created the ODNRA.

Mike reviewed the membership of the planning team that developed the 1994 plan. He described the process of developing a range of alternatives, from allowing as much OHV use as possible, to allowing the highest level of other uses possible. He described the process used to establish boundaries for the different management zones. This was done primarily by interpreting aerial photos, drawing lines on the photos, and then transferring those into GIS layers. Some lines were based on very good knowledge of conditions on the ground, and others were a “best guess”. The intent was to “fine tune” these boundaries as specific actions in the plan were implemented. The planning process lasted approximately 2.5 years.

Ross asked Mike to explain the process for changing the management area designations established in the 94 plan. Mike explained that the ODNRA plan is a “sub-plan” under the Siuslaw National Forest management plan. Such changes would be considered a minor forest plan amendment, under the authority of the Forest Supervisor. Mark Tilton asked about changes to a designated wildlife area. Mike indicated this would also come under the minor forest plan amendment, although not everyone agrees with what constitutes a “minor” versus “major” amendment.

Greg Hoover asked if the FS has “validated” the management choices and boundaries on the ground. Mike indicated that it is up to the local line officer to evaluate conditions on the ground and make appropriate changes during plan implementation. For the ODNRA, the local line officer with this authority is Central Coast District Ranger Pam Gardner.

Jody Phillips asked how much emphasis was placed on the spread of unwanted vegetation and the increasing forest land base in the dunes. Mike responded that a primary focus on the NRA is how to address the spread of non-native species. This is one area where everyone agrees there needs to be action. There has been some testing of different options for eradication of European beach grass, including some test areas to see if OHV use could eradicate the grass. These tests have been largely ineffective.

Marty Giles asked if the planning team had considered the three separate riding areas in making their management area designations. Mike responded that they did not, but rather they looked at the NRA as a whole in developing their alternatives.

In response to a question from Scott Ryland, Mike indicated that the non-motorized areas were designated both to provide areas away from motorized use for non-motorized recreation opportunities, and to provide protection for significant resources, i.e. the red fescue vegetative community.

Adele Dawson asked how the team had considered critical habitat for Snowy plover in the Siltcoos Breach area. Mike responded that identification of critical habitat for this species by USFWS did not occur until after the 94 plan was approved. He further explained that the breach itself was human made in the 1980s in an effort to restore sand movement into the dunes system. This has turned out to be an unsuccessful experiment.

Mark Tilton asked about the different approach to zoning the foredune and deflation plain wetland areas in the south riding area (zoned as 10G, Wetland Emphasis). Mike explained that in the south riding area, these deflation plain wetlands were thought to be more developed than those in the north and middle areas, and warranted a focus on wetland protection and enhancement. Jody commented that some of this area should be looked at more closely, and that the wetlands may not be as extensive as mapped. Mike indicated that in many areas, the deflation plain wetlands have been developing more rapidly than normal, due to beach grass stabilization of the foredune. He re-emphasized the concern about non-native species, and the loss of the very resource (the dunes) that the FS is charged with protecting.

Mark Tilton asked if the 93 decibel sound limit was considered in designing noise buffers. Mike explained that the buffers were designed using distinctive features that would be easy to identify on the ground, and also with consideration of the historic use in different areas.

Jody asked what the planning team used to project the growth in OHV use in future years. Mike responded that the growth projections were based on industry sales information available at the time, and the growth rate was projected to be 2-3% per year. Jody also asked how the FS can assess the levels of different types of recreational use occurring on the NRA. Mike responded that a statistically significant survey along those lines is beyond what the FS can conduct. Currently, most recreation use information is collected at the forest level, not the NRA level. This is complicated by the fact that many users are engaged in more than one activity.

Liz Kelly asked about the rationale for the area around Beal Lake being zoned as 10F, Plant, Fish and Wildlife Habitats. Mike indicated that this lake is one of the few in the NRA for which the FS ownership encompasses the entire lake shore and surrounding area. This presented a unique opportunity to enhance the fishery resource there, and also to protect significant resources, like the red fescue vegetative community.

Marty Giles commented that some non-motorized areas are receiving use that is “under the radar”, and encouraged more comprehensive evaluation of these uses. Diverse recreational use of the NRA provides diverse economic benefits to local communities.

John Getz asked if the planning team anticipated the need to “re-do” the mapping because of the dynamic landscape conditions. Mike indicated that the expectation was that the plan would be

updated every 10 years, but that has not occurred. The NRA represents a much more dynamic landscape than other FS lands in the Region.

Scott Ryland suggested that one method for getting more user information would be to attach a simple survey to permits.

John Carnahan asked if corridors would be an acceptable access solution in some areas, rather than a confined designated route. Yes, but it will depend on the location and the vegetation in the area.

Mike described the future process for actually making a decision on the establishment of additional designated routes. The FS will go through a formal planning process (NEPA process), with development and analysis of alternatives. This will include broader public involvement. He anticipates this process beginning in the coming federal fiscal year (starts in October), and the process could last 1-2 years.

Jody Phillips asked how much flexibility exists to designate routes primarily for their scenic value, rather than as connectors between open riding areas. Mike indicated that since such routes would not meet the original plan intent, they would be considered minor plan amendments. Routes for this purpose were not really considered during the original planning process, but the value of this type of experience has come to light in recent years.

John Getz commented that there are some plantation areas where trail riding does not have much impact, and other areas where it does. He specifically referred to the area between the Driftwood 2 camping area and Incinerator Road Designated Route as an area where more designated routes might be O.K. Can we “bend the rules” to designate more trails in an area like this for additional “trail experience” opportunities, even though they would not be connectors to open riding areas? Some felt that a more appropriate solution would be to propose re-zoning such areas to 10B, Open Riding.

### **Review of South Riding Area Designated Route and Rezoning Proposals:**

The group reviewed and discussed the two re-zoning proposals and nine designated route proposals for the south riding area, developed at the June 5 Working Group meeting. Working from the south end of the riding area to the north, the following additions or changes to the narratives were noted...

SA-RZ-A - Identifies several 10C parcels that lie to the east of the Old Bark Road Designated route for proposed rezoning from Mgt Area 10C to Mgt Area 10B, Open Riding. The group discussed the potential for designating all existing trails in some of these parcels, rather than re-zoning them. Consensus was that re-zoning would provide a clearer, and more easily distinguished situation for users.

SA-DR-1 – This proposal is for a designated route connecting the Bull Run area with the Horsfall Lake area. The group agreed that since most of the area involved is in management

zones other than 10C, this proposal should be moved to the Key Issues section of the final report, rather than being a 10C designated route proposal.

SA-DR-6 – This is a proposal to designate existing trails in a forested area adjacent to the Goergen property. Some members are concerned about possible impacts to the larger trees present in this stand, and would like to include language calling for an evaluation of such impacts. Group still needs better information on the exact location of the trails proposed for designation. Jody Phillips agreed to scout this area and provide more details.

SA-DR-2 – Proposed route to east of tree island on eastern boundary of riding area. Only additional concern noted was the need to evaluate impacts on the large trees adjacent to this existing trail.

SA-DR-3 – Noted that this route is an alternate route to connect between open riding areas, and that other access is available. It was noted that due to heavy use and safety concerns, having more than one connector between popular open riding areas is desirable. This route is also a good candidate for designating a wider corridor route.

SA-DR-4 – This proposal is for two separate routes, both of which provide alternate access between open riding areas to the north and south. These routes provide better riding experiences than the “washboarded” primary route that currently connects these open riding areas. Also, this is another area where heavy use argues for dispersing trail traffic onto multiple designated routes for safety reasons. This area also presents some concerns about the potential for impacts to adjacent large trees.

SA-DR-5 – It was noted that there was not yet a narrative for this proposal. This route has similar benefits to those noted for DR-4. Good alternate to washboarded route currently designated, and good options to disperse trail use. This trail is currently a very wide trail, but is also well confined within surrounding topography.

SA-DR-7 – Connector route from 430 designated route to open riding area to the west. No additional issues or concerns were noted.

SA-RZ-B – Proposal to re-zone an area north of Beal Lake to Mgt Area 10C. Some of the proposed area is currently zoned 10F, Plant, Fish and Wildlife Habitat, and there are concerns about including this portion in the proposal. It was agreed that this portion will be split out and addressed in the key issues portion of the report.

SA-DR-8 – The area of this proposed route is currently zoned 10F, and the group agreed that this should be addressed in the key issues portion of the report.

SA-DR-9 – Group feels that this route and the surrounding area need to be further evaluated for wet areas and potential habitat values. Since this area lies just north of Coos County ownership, Larry Robison agreed to scout this route and provide the group with more information at the next meeting.

Ross indicated that he would update the narratives for the south riding area proposals and distribute those to Working Group members for further review and comment in July.

### **Review of Key Issues Document (June 5 Draft):**

The group reviewed and discussed the key issues document handed out at the last meeting. They identified several key issues that need to be added to the document, and noted several edits and additions to the various narratives in the draft, as follows...

New key issues to be added to the document:

- Economic Impacts of ODNRA use.
- Safety of users
- Designated route and re-zoning proposals for areas other than Mgt Area 10C

Comment on current issues in draft document...

Issue #1 – Vegetation – Group would like to see the addition of language that proposes establishment of “test” areas for evaluating the extent to which OHV use can control the spread of European beach grass. Such tests should be well designed and carefully monitored. The original intent of establishing pine plantations needs to be clarified. These plantations were established to suppress European beach grass that was planted for dune stabilization. Narrative needs to emphasize the critical need to address the beach grass issue in the foredune areas. The dynamic landscape portion of this issue needs to strongly support a shorter plan update cycle for the ODNRA management plan. It should also note the value of a standing advisory committee to help address the management challenges presented by such a dynamic, changing landscape.

Issue #2 – Noise – The narrative should be updated to include the most recent noise compliance monitoring for 2010. The results show that 50% of the OHVs monitored exceeded the 93 decibel limit, up from 36% exceeding the limit in 2009 monitoring. Narrative should also describe the different noise limits in Oregon Law versus ODNRA standards (99 decibels vs 93 decibels). Should emphasize the need for educating users, and emphasize the need for more monitoring and enforcement of existing standards.

Issue #3 – Staffing and Funding – Proposed solutions should include seeking a dedicated funding source for increased noise monitoring and enforcement. Ideas suggested included an extra permit fee for NRA users until noise compliance levels reach an acceptable level, or extra ATV fund requests to pay for more monitoring and enforcement. The narrative on staffing levels should provide details on the actual reductions in staffing that have occurred since the 1994 plan was adopted.

Issue #4 – Adjacent and Inholding Landowners – The reference to inconsistent mapping between riding areas should be deleted, since the Group now understands the basis for those differences. Need to emphasize the importance of pursuing land exchanges, easements, agreements, and other appropriate mechanisms to secure critical access across private and county parcels in the south riding area. The most critical routes should be identified and pursued first.

Issue #5 – Signs and Fences – The narrative needs to capture the Group’s concerns about the FS intent to rely more on maps to educate users on designated route locations, rather than signage. Emphasize the need to explore agreements with neighboring landowners to fence certain areas to reduce impacts on private lands, possibly in exchange for access. Include the Group’s concerns about increasing the visibility of existing fences by adding some type of reflectors to fence posts. Encourage the FS to explore the use of GPS markers to identify the location of key features and designated routes.

Issue #6 – Existing Sand Camp Locations – The narrative should emphasize how this issue is connected to the dynamic landscape issue and the adjacent/inholding landowner issue. Should also discuss concerns about the adjacency of some sand camps to other resources, and other uses.

Issue #7 – ODNRA Carrying Capacity – The narrative for this issue should incorporate 94 plan information on the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum and anticipated user densities for Mgt Area 10C and 10B. Should emphasize the need to re-visit this issue when plan is updated. Note that this issue is closely tied to the User Safety issue.

Issue #8 – User Surveys and Feedback Systems – Should emphasize the need to develop a consistent user survey system. Possibilities noted included a simple survey attached to permits, or a standard periodic survey conducted by an academic institution such as Oregon State University. Add suggestion that periodic surveys should also survey local businesses and other recreation providers (State and County) in the area. Add suggestion that surveys should collect information on user expectations and experiences. Emphasize the need for a standing advisory committee to provide a forum for ongoing user input into management decisions and plan implementation.

Ross indicated that he would update the key issues document with the comments received and distribute a new draft to Working Group members for further review and comment in July.

**Public Comment:**

Fifteen individuals provided comments as follows...

Kathy Shamey – Represents landowners at Cleawox Lake, who are now an organized group. Landowners in this area include many OHV users. Noise is a big issue for these landowners, and is a quality of life issue. Supports the 93 decibel noise limit, and also supports closing off the unauthorized trails present in tracts adjacent to the lake. Also feels that the Working Group should include an adjacent landowner representative.

Kate Bretl – She is concerned about using a subcommittee to work on key issues, and feels that it could introduce bias into the document. Also concerned about the user capacity, as use levels are increasing. If capacity is an issue, then maybe we need to explore expanding the area available for OHV use.

Barbara Rowland – Stated that she spent time today working at the local Chamber of Commerce and answering questions of visitors. Reported on the numbers of different topics that people

asked questions about over a four hour period. Feels that the Chamber could be an important resource for collecting information on NRA use and users.

Lance Rowland – Provided copies of eight letters from OHV users. Supports the idea that we need to work on the noise abatement issue. Feels that users could help with enforcement efforts, if there was a permitting system that allowed for clear identification of individual machines, so users could report violators to enforcement personnel.

Rob Shuck – Resident of Tacoma, WA, who comes to the NRA to ride several times a month during the summer. Feels that noise is definitely an issue, and that it is easy to tell when someone is in compliance or not. Feels that stronger enforcement is the only way to get increased compliance.

Kevin Studer – Shared an article about the NRA that appeared recently in a travel magazine. The article refers to Frank Herbert (author of Dune) and Ken Kesey. Both made reference to the loss of the dunes to encroaching vegetation.

Delmar Clark – Commented on the fact that many who stop in the Florence area keep on traveling south, due to the lack of camping in this area.

Fritz Gross – Owner of Oregon Dunes KOA campground. Concerned about the lack of information the FS has on use levels in the NRA. Like a business, we need good information so we can plan and budget for necessary management. Private businesses could provide some of this use information. Also is concerned that there are still advertisements out there that encourage protecting vegetation, including beach grass. We should be encouraging people to ride on the beach grass, not protect it. Also feels that we need a noise enforcement program that catches violators and assesses real penalties.

Dan Means – 31 year resident of the local area, and resides 90 feet from FS land near Joshua Lake. Referred to early studies by OSU that led to use of European beach grass to stabilize dune areas. Also concerned that FS and BLM have closed many safe riding areas north of town, concentrating use into the NRA. Concerned about further campground closures in the area as demand is increasing. Concerned that further restrictions on OHV use will cause tourists to go elsewhere. 50% of local revenue is from tourism.

Richard Contreras – Read from a letter that he submitted for the record. Commented about the amount of dollars spent locally on OHV equipment and services. Feels that other users don't spend nearly as much on goods and services. OHV users are trying to retain their use area, and there are plenty of non-motorized areas in the NRA for other uses. OHV community is not asking for exclusive use, only to retain what we have, and share it with other users. Need to use the entire array of education, engineering and enforcement tools to resolve issues.

Edwin Johnson – Stated his agreement with the points made by Richard Contreras. Wants his family to be able to continue to enjoy riding on the NRA.

Mitch - Resident of Florence for last 10 years. Concerned about the noise issue and its impact on Florence. Feels that nothing is being done about it. Hopeful that OHV users at the meeting appear to want to resolve this problem. He kayaks on Cleawox Lake and sees OHV use in areas where they should not be present.

Jack Davis – Resident of South Loftis Road area and is close to the noise issue. Posed a question about how the noise level is being evaluated in neighborhoods, but assumes it is not. Also concerned that noise buffers don't seem to line up with where homes are actually present. Invited folks to come out during the upcoming holiday weekend and experience the noise first hand. Explained that a 3 decibel increase, actually increases the noise by 50%. Described what 93 decibels sounds like. Stated that OSHA has determined that noise between 90 and 95 decibels causes permanent hearing loss.

Steve Newman – Resident of Munsell Lake area. Noise is an issue for him, but feels that local gun club makes more noise than quads. Concerned that more restrictions on OHV use will result in Florence looking like downtown Detroit.

Jane Meyer – Resident of old town area of Florence. Can sometimes hear OHV noise inside her house with the windows closed. We need to enforce the 93 decibel limit. Should be able to go into the woods and hear the sounds of nature without ATV noise in the background. Also commented on seeing Snowy plovers in the Siltcoos Outlet area, and feels that this area should be off limits.

### **Wrap Up and Future Planning:**

#### Future work and meeting dates discussion -

The group discussed the status of their work, and the plan for getting feedback on proposals and on the key issues document. Ross will be producing updated drafts of the proposal narratives and key issues document, and will distribute those for Working Group member feedback during the next 30 – 45 days. The group decided that it would be best to have feedback on the key issues document from all 14 Working Group members, rather than using a subcommittee to work on the document.

There will be two more meetings of the Working Group. After an initial discussion of potential dates in September and October, it was determined that a Doodle poll distributed to members would be the best way to select the dates for these meetings.

#### Closing thoughts from Working Group members –

Mark Tilton – Feels that the group is very close to having their discussions and ideas well documented.

Liz Kelly – Good to have Mike Harvey here for the 94 plan discussion. Feels that the meeting went very well.

Greg Hoover – Feels that the group is moving along well and coming to good solutions.

Marty Giles – Appreciates all the expertise in the group, and also the valuable information that is being shared in e-mails to the group.

Scott Ryland – Also felt it was good to have Mike Harvey here today. The group is making good progress, with a few issues still to be worked out.

Larry Robison – Thinks the group has a good handle on their mandate to address Mgt Area 10C. Feels it is important that the group has identified the other key issues, and that effort supplements what the group is doing.

Jody Phillips - Enjoyed the meeting. Meetings have been a good education for all. He hopes that the work ends up meaning something. He feels that the group has really dealt with the issues and placed everything out on the table.

John Getz – Also please that Mike Harvey attended, and felt that it helped greatly with his understanding. Noise seems to be the recurring issue and is pleased that the group is dealing with it. The facilitator is doing a phenomenal job.

Adele Dawson – Feels that it was another great meeting, due to facilitator. It is good to hear public comments from both sides of the issue.

Mike Myers – Emergency responders favor more travel corridors to spread out use and avoid the “funnels” that occur around staging areas. Feels that the group is making great progress.

The meeting concluded at 3:40 P.M.