

# Lower Deschutes River Managers Meeting Minutes

November 6, 2020

10 am – 12:15 pm

ZOOM - 834-1646-2172

Local Govt. Chaired

**10:05 AM**    **Welcome and Introductions:** In attendance: Scott Hege (Local Government); Jeff Kitchens (BLM); Mary Fleischmann (Facilitator); Brad Houslet (CTWS); Kat Smith (BLM); Monica Morin (BLM); Rod French (ODFW); Steve Memminger (OPRD); CC Marilla (BLM); Tim Schwaretz (OSP); PUBLIC – Silas Lewis (Allstar); Rob Miles (Imperial); Spencer Ehrman(Deschutes Club, Maupin); Brian Sykes (Outfitter); Andy (Deschutes River Adventures); Jennifer Wilde

**10:08 AM**    **Review/Additions to agenda/ Approval of agenda and meeting minutes**

- No additions or changes to agenda or meeting minutes. Jeff made motion to accept minutes from October meeting, Rod 2<sup>nd</sup> – motion passed, minutes accepted.

**10:10 AM**    **Old Business**

- OPRD- capacity of website to house archived minutes from previous Managers/IIT meetings. Steve M is working on this. OPRD can currently put on the website the agenda and current meeting notes. Jeff shared that the meeting minutes have been scanned and archived and are fully complete with some information going back to 1999. It is currently saved on BLM internal drives. In doing this work BLM came across many Drafts and working on finding final decisions and by next year hope to have a lot more of this discovered. Question regarding how large is the archive size. Jeff can find out, currently not sure but guess is 100 mega-bytes. Steve shared he needs to find out how much they can store and want to make it into an easy format. It was shared to make sure there are certain standards followed for the sight and hearing impaired.
- Frequent User Pass (FUP) – Scott reported that this past year the committee or those interested to be involved have not met due to

COVID. Scott plans to work on pulling the group back together this winter and needs to connect with Jeff for this first meeting. This focus group would make a recommendation to the IIT and then it would go to the Managers. Since this is the first working group/ focus group, Mary shared that she would attend and take minutes/notes so we have the discussion on record. Scott thought that would be a good idea.

- ZOOM meetings. Scott has volunteered to use what he has available until the County takes it away. If the incoming chairs have a different format that is okay as well.

\*\*\*Forgot to report out IIT recommendations – back tracked and Jeff and Mary reported from minutes of last IIT meeting.

- Recap of minutes from IIT meeting in October –
  - Already discussed posting on OPRD's website with minutes from IIT and Managers meetings
  - Discussion regarding surfing and paddle board situations on the river. Currently from discussion at that meeting this river use means untethered which from previous discussion with float devices, etc., once untethered then a boater pass is required. Currently have not heard of any conflicts directly but the potential is there. This fits the same criteria of all floatable devices. Discussions were had about safety concerns, education and signage. Another concern was of issues in the past with kayakers in Moody Rapids.
  - Asked about boundaries in the City of Maupin regarding exceptions to some float rules. Jeff to check out if there are any maps addressing this, but the whole river is designated Wild and Scenic.
  - New chairs for 2921
  - Discussed the transfer of roles in OPRD with Chris P leaving. Steve M is now District Manager and filling in for Chris' position.
  - Discussion of ZOOM meetings
  - Round Table of agencies
  - Public comment – discussion of the construction of compost toilets and when they will go in. Talked about people not wearing PFD's and jumping into the river. Concerns regarding closure of campgrounds on Tribal properties- can this change? Discussion regarding if we are getting what we need for the cost with law enforcement, seemed high to some. Conversation around weed and goat head issues in

campgrounds and the need to do more on the ground work with that.

**10:20 AM**     **New Business**

- Recommendations regarding surfing/paddleboards and need for boater pass. Again this use falls under the rules of being on the river untethered then you are floating and that requires a boater pass. Jeff shared that there may be a need for a focus group to look at what areas that there is a concern for this use. A concern brought up is that many of these particular users do not wear a PFD which is required in rapids. This becomes a liability issue. While this is a new use of the river on the Lower Deschutes, want to get ahead of this before there are problems. Per historical issues in Moody Rapids, you cannot linger in the rapid and must allow right of way to boaters. Looking at signage and public education as well as identifying areas of concerns specific to this use. Jeff addressed the issue of boundaries and exemptions in the City of Maupin. He could not locate any maps that showed rules/regulations regarding boundaries. Segment 2 is part of the Wild and Scenic River Corridor and as such all rules apply the same. Discussion of the various kinds of permits that are issued along with the boater pass – FUP (Frequent User Pass and Land owner access passes to allow private land owners to be able to float to their property...they cannot just float in front of their property, that would require a boater pass. It is designed specifically for those people to get to their property. Again recommendation in the next couple of months to look at a focus group to decide what kind of education, signage and location for this needs to happen.
- Presentation by OPRD – Steve reported that he is unsure of the numbers but knows there was a 30% increase of passes for Moody Island. Heritage to the mouth of the Columbia he is not sure of the numbers but there was a 9% increase in use at campground. OPRD experienced increases all summer statewide in their parks. Car camps up 90% as well as day use. Rod with ODFW shared that Moody Island was closed to fishing until Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>, but once it was opened saw a higher than usual number of people. At Heritage it was extremely high as there was fall chinook and high number of folks using the ramp.
- Jeff shared some of the discussion regarding the surfing and paddleboard issues. He suggested that a focus group be pulled

together in the coming months. Need to identify areas that are or could create issues. Decide what kind of signage could be made available as well as best locations for signage. Also how to get the educational aspect out there to boaters. All of this is important to address any liability concerns. Jeff followed up regarding the discussion at IIT of boundaries in Maupin which would make them exempt from some of the guidelines in the plan. Jeff could not find any maps showing boundaries specific to Maupin. All of the Lower Deschutes is a Wild and Scenic corridor and all segments of the river must abide by rules/regulations per the river management plan.

- Jeff presented seasonal use numbers for 2020 and point out what decisions the Managers need to make regarding use numbers and limited entry for season 2021. He shared charts for many years leading up to 2021 so that all numbers were accurate given the various systems used throughout the previous years (prior to Rec.Gov) were up to date. Frequent User passes are not available during limited entry and the number sold for 2020 was 17. Historically numbers in 2003 sole were 916 and in 2007 it was 168. These passes continue to drop and have no significant impact to seasonal targets.
- Segment 1 currently the daily target I 550 and there were 4 days above that, and it is in limited entry. Seasonal targets were not met and so BLM sees no need to reduce use levels.
- Segment 2 never hits daily or seasonal targets. Seasonal targets are 86,200 with daily targets at 1700. Daily targets were not even close to 1700 (1300 for 2020) and again seasonal targets not close. No changes in this segment.
- Segments 3 A and 3B. 3A daily targets are 1300 with seasonal 15,000. Segment B daily targets are 250 and seasonal 13,600.3A did not hit seasonal or daily targets. 3B also did not hit seasonal or daily targets. These segments have gone 2 years not hitting targets and so would come out of limited entry for 2021 season.
- Segment 4 daily targets are 325 but was adjusted in 2017 to 214. Seasonal targets are 18,300. It went into limited entry in 2020. Segment 4 went above daily targets (hit or were close) 15 days. Did exceed seasonal targets in 2020.
- BLM has been working on getting data cleared up again due to the various systems used throughout the previous years. Here are some recommendations: Segment 1 went into

limited entry in 2019 and did not hit seasonal targets so recommended that remains in limited entry with no reduction in use numbers. Segment 3A and 3B did not hit seasonal or daily targets so recommend that these segments come out of limited entry. Segment 4 there are two options. A would be to keep limited entry at daily use of 214 and no change in seasonal target. B would be to keep limited entry and reduce daily use by 10% which would lower daily use targets to 193 for 2021.

- Discussion: people were surprised by number of days in segment 4 that hit the daily target. 2020 was first time this segment also hit seasonal targets with no show rates since 2016, the question is whether this was due to the pandemic and more people getting out and the need to wonder if this trend will continue into next year. Group looked at chart to see what 193 target would look like for 2021 and it showed would have even higher numbers surpassing the daily target. What was seen on the river is that this year it was more small groups, families and solo use vs/ larger groups as seen in times past. Question was asked of BLM what they were seeing in this segment on the river. Monica from BLM shared that she was lower numbers and maybe there were more no shows because of impacts from fires and smoke. CC shared that smoke was definitely an issue and was surprised there were not more cancellations and agrees with Monica that there might have been far more no shows. In comparing use numbers from 2019 to 2020, there definitely were higher numbers by quite a bit in 2020. It was noted that it appeared there were more midweek use day, which stretched use out more than from previous years. If next year hit daily target would have to reduce in the following year (2022). BLM should have a better idea about use in Segment 4 next year as they will be concentrating on data collecting as moving forward with EA and can focus on no show numbers. Scott felt comfortable maintaining daily target at 214. Rod agreed but shared that he was on the river and due to blow out at White River he did not observe a lot of people on the river. Brad and Steve agree with maintaining the 214 target.
- MOTION: motion made by Jeff to...Segment 1 to remain in limited entry with no reduction in daily use numbers. Segment 2 there are no changes. Segment 3A and 3B, would come out of limited entry for 2021. Segment 4 will

remain in limited entry with current daily targets to remain at 214 (no reduction in daily targets) but if segment 4 hits seasonal targets in 2021 then daily use targets for 2022 would be reduced to 193. Steve 2<sup>nd</sup> motion. MOTION passed.

- Jeff wanted to wants to thank CC for pulling all the numbers together for this presentation regarding seasonal use numbers.

## **11:17 AM     Round Table Discussions and Updates**

- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs – Brad reported no new updates. Tribal lands are still close and there is day use only. There is no camping on Tribal lands. There will be activity on the river due to the fall chinook carcass counts. A question was posed as to when there would be reopening of Tribal properties not on the reservation. Brad shared that it is being considered but nothing has moved to date.
- OSMP – Josh not available
- OSP – Tim did not have anything significant to report at this time.
- ODFW- Rod shared there is not a lot but they will be beginning the fall chinook population counts. There will be a sled boat and power boat on the river between Trout Creek and upstream to the dam. There will also be a low elevation helicopter with flights over 100 miles of river. Shared there was heavy use at Moody Island. Fish management was excellent this year across the state. Fishing was good and fishing was very popular this year. Steelhead is poor but there is an uptick from previous years.
- Wasco Co. Sheriff – Lane unable to attend
- OPRD – Not a lot to report out. Two toilets are going with that have been approved. Currently prepping for installation and should be ready by this month or end of year on site. These replace two that were burned a few years back.
- BLM- SRP's are being looked at with the start of the end of the seasonal use. BLM looking at negotiations with fee's, etc. due to impacts of the pandemic on outfitter/guides. Prospectus went out and closed Oct.30<sup>th</sup>. Did not have exact numbers of how many applied due to office closures but there were openings for 4 and he believes maybe at least 3 applied. BLM not too worried about a significant flood of applications, lately applications have been primarily academic applicants not outfitter/guides so minimal

competition. Use in campground use was astronomical this year and wanted to give kudo's to ranger staff for incredible job they did with keeping facilities clean and checking on campgrounds. There has been road deterioration this year but this is ongoing and being addressed. Plan for coming year is to do an inventory on conditions of the various sites regarding repairs, signage, etc. Boat ramps are on their radar and will coordinate with State and Tribal partners to move forward with repairs. Looking at fire rehab and restoration plan on White River where the entire wilderness was impacted by fire. Forest Service is working on this as well but this will take several years. Can expect erosion issues to continue in next couple of years with more debris.\

- Local Government – Scott shared there is not a lot to report out. Still dealing with COVID with Oregon count yesterday increased to 800 but not seeing hospitalizations going up. There was an outbreak in a nursing home which impacted 50 and the most current outbreak is in the Veteran's Home with 9 cases total. Wants everyone to take this pandemic serious.

**11:34 AM**     **Public Comment**

- Rob Miles thanked Jeff (BLM) for presentation with use report. Questioned if we continue to not have Harpham and White River camping open is there a plan for or looking at other options. He estimated that with Tribal Lands closed to camping they encompass 70% of the campsites available. Brad responded that these closures are not permanent, they are a temporary hindrance but these are not long term closures. What has been happening with the pandemic affects many other Tribal properties as well. Question raised regarding who manages these sites – access, facilities, etc. It was explained that BLM manages upkeep of facilities and the availability of access to the river but closures are subject the Tribal decisions as they own the properties. Jeff shared that he believes Rob's numbers or percentages might be off regarding camping. There are 13 group sites at Harpham and 5 at White River. Further discussion about understanding the issues of campgrounds and crowding.
- Silas thanked everyone for the meeting and presentations. He doesn't understand the seasonal numbers on Segment 4. He shared that he thinks it is vital to allow as much reasonable use of public lands as is feasible. He questioned why the seasonal

number exists and was asking to look at changing seasonal limits. He also asked about the no show rates which no one has any idea of what that number is, there is no one monitoring this number and there are no incentives or consequences for people to cancel rather than not show up. He believes that the seasonal target numbers are arbitrary. He lost lots of customers this year due to smoke and the blow out at White River. Scott also wondered or did not quite understand how the seasonal numbers came to be. Jeff shared that historically there was extensive research and studies done to establish the daily and seasonal targets and limits were codified in the Settlement Agreement. To make changes to these numbers would require a lot of work, but BLM will be collecting data specific to Segment 4 in the coming year as they are aware of the issues. Studies don on the no show rates have been looked at and originally it was thought to be as high as 15% but then it was agreed to by everyone to lower that to 5%. In the past these rates were based on past ways of counting using paper passes which was not statistically accurate. Silas doesn't understand the value of seasonal limits – why/what is it? He doesn't see anything wrong happening on the river nor is he seeing crowding. Jeff shared overall the targets are there as a check and balance to assist managers in managing the resource, a way to monitor use across days and to look at cumulative impacts.

- Andy with Deschutes River Adventures agrees with Silas and lost a lot of rafters and guiding due to fires. He saw a lot of private boater out this year and less BLM staff at the ramps. These boaters were tying up the ramps, hogging more than one lane. Very little boater etiquette. He also observed camping all over the river in on-camp sites. Jeff address the BLM staffing concern as they limited staff contact with the public due to COVID exposure concerns – safety of their staff. Scott suggested that maybe more signage for clarity regarding ramp etiquette might be in order.

## **12:03 PM Final Discussion, Follow Up, Action Items**

- New Chairs: 2021 IIT Chair is OPRD; Managers Chair is ODFW.
- Schedule for meetings for Managers and IIT for 2021
  - Managers
    - Feb 19<sup>th</sup> (10 -1Pm)
    - May 21<sup>st</sup> (10 –1 PM)
    - Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> (10 –1 PM)

- August – Keep open for possible field trip or float
- IIT
  - Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> (10 -1PM)
  - May 7<sup>th</sup> (10 -1PM)
  - Aug. 6 (10 -1PM) – this could very well be a virtual meeting.
  - Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> (10 – 1PM)

12:15 PM **Meeting adjourned**