

# Lower Deschutes River IIT Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2021

10 am – 1pm

ZOOM – 870-4250-3268

Chair – OPRD/ David Spangler

**10:00 AM**    **Introductions:** Scott Hege (Local Government); Jeff Kitchens (BLM); Adam Shimer (OSP); Jen Graham (CTWS); Kyle Hensley (BLM); Eric Pronold (BLM); Mike Millay (BLM); David Spangler (OPRD); Rob Miles (Imperial River Outfitters); Brad Staples (Western Fishing Adventures); Valerie White; Ron Walp; DRA

## **Review /Additions to agenda/ Approval of agenda and meeting minutes. (Approval of minutes from IIT meeting of February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021)**

One additional item on agenda; Motions made by David to approve agenda, second by Scott – motion passed. Motion by David to approve minutes from February meeting, second by Jeff. Motion passed.

## **Old Business:**

- Mary had question regarding OPRD website. David to follow up and make sure have accurate information and that minutes, once approved are placed on website.
- Acknowledge that Tim Swartz can only attend meetings via phone.
- FUP – Frequent User Pass. Scott will follow up with Jeff to set up dates. Scott has been extremely busy but will get on this. He will keep us informed when things get lined up.
- Follow up with IIT developing plan for surfing and paddleboard issues. Dave and Jeff haven't received complaints from anyone. Need more information from community. Will keep tabs on it this summer and see what kind of responses they get from the community. Adam shared that there is local concern at Mecca and Warm Springs put-ins. He is seeing bleed over from Bend where paddle boarding is very common. His concerns is that folks see the river at these put-ins as calm and do not realize that a bit further

down the river are rapids. Thinks that warning signs might be in order.

- Revisit survey collaboration with BLM and OPRD. Jeff reported that there is a meeting later in May to talk through the process. Waiting for staffing and not sure how feasible it will be to do the surveys. BLM is hard pressed with staffing shortages but going to try. Would like to find out the no show rates but may have to push doing the surveys out to next year. OPRD can report more at the next IIT meeting.
- Tribal campground updates- Jen reported that campgrounds are open for day use only. Not sure what might happen in coming months, she just doesn't know and this is tribal lands. The tribes need to see improvement from COVID. Scott asked if there is an opportunity to provide information to the Tribal Council. Scott is open to talking with the Tribal Council if that would be helpful. Everyone is aware of the impact to the river regarding camping and Jen will pass this along to Brad.
- Additional members from Tribes on IIT/Managers. Jen Graham will be attending IIT meetings for now and Brad at Managers meetings. There is a hiring freeze and once someone else is hired that person will most likely attend IIT.

### **New Business**

- Place holder for conversation/discussion about E-Bikes. David gave some background information regarding OPRD's rules for E-bikes. They are allowed only on trails that are 8 feet wide. From Heritage they are allowed for the first 2 miles and then it is ODFW land and E-bikes are not allowed. They are seeing a large amount of E-bikes and have been doing soft education in campsites. This is a pretty contentious situation. Adam shared that public access is an issue and there has not been any specific directions give on how to address this. He expects that this is going to become a bigger issue. Jeff shared that he has not heard any complaints but will have to make some kind of decision, the Managers will have to address this issue as a group at some point. Different agencies have different regulations. BLM regulations direction are decided by district. BLM has to look at doing an EA (environmental assessment) when it comes to restrictions and that has to match social affects. There is no EA put together yet but this is going to have to be a priority for the Managers group to make a decision to

work together as a group- collectively make a decision. If NEPA is necessary BLM would be responsible to move forward, very similar process that happened on the segment 1 EA. Need to keep the discussion open. If want to do an EA need to start that process along with looking at all uses on the river. Looking at levels of use above and beyond just boating. Question brought up about Commercial SRP's and using E-Bikes. There is the Sheras Falls Scenic bike way which is on paved road so there is no need for specific permits. There is an increase of use which is crowding roads. A concern is that E-bike tours could create conflicts on roadways. Question raised about who manages the scenic bikeways. David shared that OPRD oversees scenic bikeways. Question raised about how conflicts are dealt with in other places, David will follow up on this. Jeff shared that he is getting lots of calls with concerns about congestion on the roads. There was one entity that reached out for a SRP for an event in June but the turnaround time was not adequate to meet deadline. They wanted to use a dirt road that is a BLM access road. Again if they are on paved roads there is no need for a permit. Recommendation is to keep this topic as a place holder for IIT but also bring it to the attention of the Managers group.

- Fire regulations on the Lower Deschutes. David added this to the agenda to have a discussion of what are the guidelines. Currently Sherman County and possibly Wasco County are moving fire bans to go into effect as of May 15<sup>th</sup>. The Lower Deschutes plan has fires banned as of June 1<sup>st</sup>. Lots of concerns as we continue to have drought conditions. Wonder if we should not be following county regulations for fire bans. Scott shared that the Oregon Department of Forestry tells counties when bans go into effect. OPRD also follows county regulations. Jeff said that BLM started updating their press releases and have asked their fire staff, who manages this what factors are taken into account for them to decide on bans. Further discussion about having bans all on the same day. It is dry in fact dryer than usual. Some areas are more of a threat or danger at this time. Jeff shared there is no need to change the June 1 date on the Deschutes as it will only confuse people. It would be difficult to get compliance.

## **Round Table Discussions and Updates**

- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs – Not a lot more to add. There is fishing at Scherars Falls 3 days a week. They have a new BIA superintendent who will be introduced to the Managers group. Camping updates will be notified on their website.
- OSMB / Oregon State Marine Board –No report
- OSP/ Oregon State Police – Adam reported they had the annual Law Enforcement meeting last week. Discussion about paddleboard issue. Doing day patrols. Had a question regarding people not having their boaters pass as they put them into boxes at Warm Springs, Mecca and Trout Creek – left over from when we used to do paper permits. Jeff shared that BLM will get those boxes taken down. Resolution is that boaters can have their boater pass on their phone. April 22<sup>nd</sup> fishing started. They checked with 71 anglers, 21 boats and had 100% compliance. As far as the passes put in boxes it was probably 4 or 5. There was a homeless camp at Mecca, garbage left behind. Currently not there as too many people on the river but will keep an eye on this situation. Adam also shared that there was a major theft of \$10,000 worth of fishing equipment at Trout Creek. People need to make sure to lock up their equipment at night. Adam also shared that what OSP is seeing on the John Day River is people not getting their boater pass as they are okay with just paying the fine. He thinks fining everyone can eliminate this issue. Over Memorial Day weekend the plan is to have a high presence on bike and boats. The Dalles office plans to have law enforcement presence on every mile on the Deschutes.
- ODFW/ Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife – no report
- Wasco Co. Sheriff Dept.- no report
- OPRD/ Oregon Park and Recreation Department- Dave reported that there is an increase in back country use. There is a \$7 parking fee for overnight parking and that is how they can calculate the increase in use. Some weeks vary from 15 to up to 32 cars parked. There has been backpacking and bike camping upriver all the way to Harris. There is an increase in fire-pits which they take apart as well as people collecting wood. OPRD will be doing enforcement floats on weekends in June and weekly runs July thru September. They have full staffing this year and hope to do overnight trips. Doing soft enforcement with E-Bike issue.
- BLM/Bureau of Land Management – Jeff reported a significant number of staff pulled out after being hired. The lead park ranger position has not been filled yet. Seasonal staff will be staggered and the John Day ranger will be brought back to the Deschutes. They are having to be creative in finding help from other agencies. In the near future will have a new scat machine at Maupin City

Park. They have the okay to start construction on the Bake Oven building. BLM's heavy equipment operator retired so bringing someone over from Burns/Vale district to help out and get the road graded. The road does need moisture to be graded so may also need a water tender. Lastly, public comment is open until August, regarding the proposed changes to boater fees to a flat \$5.00 and \$10 per night for camping on Segments 1 and 4. Press release has gone out throughout the Pacific North West.

- Local Government – Wasco County is back to extreme risk category but hope move out of that by tomorrow. Governor is changing how risks are measured which will be more tied to hospitalizations rather than cases. By the end of June she will lift all COVID restrictions as vaccinations are readily available. They had 69 cases in past 2 weeks and was one of 15 counties put into extreme risk. The good news is because of that Wasco Co. received \$360,000 of “Cares” money for businesses.

### **Public Comment**

- Brad Staples is thankful that the group is taking a hard look at the E-Bikes issue. Hopefully OSP can enforce those that go past mile 2. He also wanted to bring attention to a former owner of land at Washout Rapid that has brought in heavy equipment to create a road on what is now public land. He has retained his grazing rights but the road goes along the water – the cows are on the other side of the railroad. He said that is was a handshake agreement for the road so the owner can get in and fish. Jeff will follow up but said there has been an increase for people wanting to put in roads. Brad will send specific information to Jeff.
- Rob Miles complained about there being no end in sight for campgrounds to open up at Harpham and White River and wants to know what are “they” (managing agencies) going to do to create campgrounds. He wants answers. Jen shared that at her level she can't do a lot, the Tribal Council makes those decisions, but she will pass the information/frustration along. She is hopeful that a decision will be made soon. Question about what is BLM's role with the Tribal campgrounds, where does the revenue go from those sites? Jeff shared that BLM has easements for the ability to allow access to the river and to allow law enforcement to enforce regulations. BLM does not lay out rules specific to campgrounds on Tribal lands. Funds go back to managing the river. BLM is not in a position to tell the Tribes how to manage their lands. It is not

realistic for BLM with NEPA, etc. to provide additional campsites. Availability of camping long term to be looked at as we look at how to manage increases in overall river use, possibly private lands could develop camping. Rob also asked about the scenic bikeway being set up in Maupin if they need an SRP? Jeff again shared that if they are on paved roads they would not and if on dirt roads managed by BLM they would be required to get an SRP, but he also shared would have to take into consideration any congestion issues in high use times. Rob also addressed the tear off of boater passes to place in box and questioned whether they have to check in when in limited entry- Jeff following up on this issue.

- Brad wanted to add that he agrees with David regarding no reasons for fires due to conditions. People are dragging tree limbs, not using saws or cutting them up but just keep feeding the tree into the fire. There is very little moisture and he is of the opinion that of wondering why there are fires allowed year round anyways – propane is all you really need.

### **Final Discussion, Follow Up, Action Items**

- E-Bikes – inform managers of issues
- Jeff to follow up with Fire regulations/ industrial fire regulations- how is regulations designated.
- State Parks –check on guidelines, rules, conflicts with scenic bike ways.
- Coordination of signage regarding paddle boards.

### **Next Meeting**

- Managers May21st 10 – 1 pm
- IIT August 6 th 10 – 1 pm

**Meeting adjourned. 11:40 AM**