

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners

2/21/17, PM

Attending:

Jim Detro - JD (BOCC)

Andy Hover - AH (BOCC)

Chris Branch - CB (BOCC)

Mike Williams -Okanogan-Wenatchee N'tl Forest Supervisor

Matt Reidy - USFS Tonasket Ranger Jessica McCarthy - Aide to Newhouse

Craig Vejraska - Rancher

Nichole Kuchenbuch - Haerberle-Kuchenbuch Ranch Rep Kit Arbuckle, Okanogan Republicans

Jon Wyss - Gebbers Family Rep

Convened @ 1:30 PM

LOTS of cow-people (60+)

Business with Forest Service:

- **North Cascades Smoke Jumper Base**

Williams begins by noting bad info going around. Base needs renovation, buildings moved, etc. Capital improvement cost analysis currently in development, along with preliminary cost/benefit analysis of current site and others (Yakima, Wenatchee). NO PLANS YET, and no real deadline for analyses; probably early Spring. NCSB will continue operating at Winthrop through 2017 and Williams "expects" into the future but no promises.

Detro talks about history, and "what's RIGHT": first jumper base in country, he was a jumper for a few years ago, removal from Winthrop will impact a dozen families as well as the town and county in terms of economics.

Hover promises to keep the pressure on USFS through county, town institutions.

Branch: Does FAA have \$ in airport? In his experience, this determines whether FAA really cares about obstructions & other regulatory problems. No answer forthcoming

- **Outfitter permits**

Williams: Supplemental EIS for permits recently out of preliminary comment period. Now we have 45 day objection period, then objection resolution, then another 45 days. Permits should be out in September. Sort of general disgruntlement from DeTro. "My outfitter buddies don't get to play but Outward Bound does".

- **Travel Plan, road closures**

Hover: seems like this got fixed but then got reconsidered.

DeTro: because of environmental groups un-named in league with USFS former Supervisor "Our gal" Heath (yes, he actually called her that), hence Supplemental. They want to CLOSE EVERYTHING, then re-open piece-meal.

Huston: actually, it was all procedural stuff, didn't close anything or even intend to."

Williams: kind of same time-frame as Outfitters, should have clarity in the Fall. Nothing is going to get closed anytime soon.

Detro: Kinross mine is going away, taking gazillions with it, and it's all because of government interference and delay.

- **Grizzlies**

DeTro: "Grizzly EIS was adopted by reference to EIS in Forest Plan, which has not been adopted yet, therefore how can Grizzly EIS be valid?" Nobody responds; probably, no reasonable response available.

Hover: "Pretty apparent that feds aren't following their own process", doesn't specify how they are failing to do so. Also, grizzly migration simulations/studies put bears in Downtown Riverside, how can this be?

DeTro again: "When you move a grizzly from where it is now to a new location, it is counted as a "mortality" there, which means screwing up the whole endangered species count everywhere"

- **THE BIG ISSUE --- USFS trips over itself**

- Tonasket ranger sent out 25 letters of non-compliance to assorted ranchers on USFS grazing allotments: exceeding utilization, wrong place wrong time, etc.
- Apparently nobody in Okanogan County has ever received such a letter before .
- This is intimidation by the government, makes permittees fear they'll lose livelihood
- Somebody among ranchers put together a letter to USFS (attached as scan), calling them out and demanding a climb-down, at the very least
- DeTro outraged, reads letter and demands aloud. Calls for Coordination, because Collaboration is just Capitulation (or something....there was another "C" there that I can't recall). Also, 72 hours between violation and notice required.
- Ranger Matt Reidy steps in: We got the data last fall, finally finished analysis and immediately sent out the notices. All the compliance issues are stuff that the permittees know about and have helped to develop; we work with permittees every year.
- Permittees should be allowed to work with data gatherers, range specialists. THEY ARE, always have been. Meetings starting soon.
- Hover: letters were a poor choice
- Branch: a bit lacking in finesse
- General conclusion, after much kerfuffle: "Oops, we maybe didn't handle that so well."
- DeTro with the threats: "I know people in DC"
- McCarthy: my boss is aware and is watching carefully
- Kuchenbuch: letters need to be rescinded
- Hover agrees
- Some gentleman from Public Lands Council: "We're talking to Nethercutt, et al."
- And, of course, no apparent resolution

- Assorted reportage from Reidy re: money: Tonasket fuel-reduction project funding; Mt Hall project funding through Nature Conservancy (he says apologetically), UW (Professor Churchill?). More funds coming through Colville Tribe (Disautel).

Forest Service folks left ca. 3:30 after much individual confabbing with permittees, Commissioners, as if nothing had happened.

Final business of day: Mike Worden, Okanogan County Sheriff Communications Manager Show & Tell (apparently first appearance before the BOCC). Emergency comms system is all hosed-up, huge bottlenecks especially in Pateros/Brewster, and we have no money. Putting up a backbone with chewing gum and baling wire so we can use Ferry County for emergency dispatch back-up, since there's no room at our dispatch center.

Didn't hang around for much more than that: it's an issue I'm vaguely aware of (my profession plus being a firefighter), could meet with Worden personally if anybody needs real info; he was mostly tap-dancing for the newbies.

END