

**Wallowas Management Unit Master Plan  
Advisory Committee Meeting  
September 7, 1:30-4:30 p.m.  
Joseph, OR**

Staff Attending: JR Collier, Matt Rippee, Ian Matthews, David Stipe, and Carrie Lovellette

Committee Members Attending:

Susan Roberts, Brian Woolf, Dan Leonard, James Monteith, Curtis Booher, Rick Bombaci, Kathleen Ackley, Bob Barstad, Pat Matthews, Grant Ritchie, Lottie Ritchie, Michael Lockhart, Lisa Hayes, and Russ Howison.

Committee Members Unable to Attend:

Paul Pagano, Jeff Yanke, Vicki Searles, and Carey Miller.

JR Collier gave introduction and overview of the parks, then David Stipe and Ian Matthews presented the planning process and timeline.

**Minam**

Ian Matthews discussed cultural resource, natural resource, and visitor experience assessments, then there was a discussion of OPRD-identified needs and development proposals.

*(Advisory Committee member questions and comments with staff responses are paraphrased below)*

Question: What about the Tribes? The history of the Tribes and the ethnographic resources in the park don't seem to be represented here. Minam was a huge village site that has been largely destroyed by recent development. Tribes don't necessarily want more recreation in the area further degrading those resources.

Staff: That is one reason why there is not a lot of development or expansion being suggested. OPRD has done some archaeological studies in the park and the proposed development takes into account protection of archaeological resources.

Comment: These areas are not just where the Indians used to live, they are still very important to Indians. There seems to be a hole in OPRD's assessment work to date.

Staff: More information about past and current Native American uses of the park would be helpful. Information about Euro-American settlements is more readily available, OPRD does not have very much information about Tribal history.

- Question: Have the Tribes shared any information with state parks or anyone else?
- Comment: Frankly no one has asked. The Tribe has a lot of information but we also have staff to do research.
- Question: Equestrian use – do think this area is attractive to people with stock?
- Staff: There are quite a few equestrian folks using the park – a lot of the time they park by the shop. They tend to go up above the park property and also go across the Minam River and onto Forest Service property.
- Question: Are they riding cross country?
- Staff: My assumption would be that they are on trails once they leave the park.
- Question: Do you have estimates if park improvements were implemented, how many people would come? One of the most attractive things about Minam is that it's remote. Is the aim with these improvements to draw more people to the park?
- Staff: Most of the proposed development is aimed at improving management and experience for uses that are already happening in the park. Overnight camping is already happening for example. We would not expect these improvements to increase numbers much, but the goal is to better organize the recreational use, increase safety, etc.
- Comment: Right now it is completely unorganized and being down there every day as we are you can see the chaos. People are camping out and parking everywhere - we just really need to get it organized.
- Staff: We are very protective of the character of this park because we don't have many parks with this type of remote character in the park system. The biggest change would be formalizing the existing parking and improvements to operations and management and visitor experience. But it's worth considering whether adding camping facilities would attract more visitors.
- Question: Would there be toilet facilities by the hiker/biker?
- Staff: Just the existing CXT vault – no showers or other amenities.
- Comment: I think you are on to something with the parking lot concept overlooking the area because the folks with the boats want to stay close to their boats. They have a lot of money invested and want to keep an eye on their property.
- Question: Would you paint lines at the beginning of the season on the gravel? If there is no structure it will become a clustered mess like it already is.

Staff: Yes, we have experimented with several types. Paving is cost prohibitive.

Question: Are you going to leave the old concrete at the abutment?

Staff: The plan is to leave the abutment - possibly put a picnic shelter on top as well.

Question: Would leaving the abutment cause erosion issues with the river digging in to that area?

Staff: We have not identified that yet. We have not done a full engineering estimate. We are only at the planning level at this point.

Comment: We would love the abutment to go away. It would improve the flooding in the area.

Question: At what point do you take these concepts to the Tribes? And, if the Tribes do not agree, what do we do then?

Staff: These concepts are preliminary, nothing is set in stone at this point. We have reached out to the Tribes and are happy to present the concepts to Tribal Council for review.

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David Stipe presented and discussed detailed design concepts for the Minam Campground and Minam Station.

Question: Did you say you are not proposing any new camping at this site?

Staff: We are seeking to control the existing camping so we are not really increasing it. However, the new walk-in camping would be a new designated camping area.

Question: What is the occupancy at the Minam Campground?

Staff: On the weekends during the summer it's somewhere in the teens per night, during the week maybe 5-6 sites occupied. After Labor Day maybe 3 sites filled per night, higher on the weekends if the weather is nice.

Staff: We are not proposing to make electrical or plumbing upgrades, mostly just reconfiguring what is already existing.

Question: Has there been any thought about providing camping for people on bicycles at the Campground given that the proposed walk-in sites are probably not suitable for bicycles? People probably don't want to take their bikes down the trail.

Staff: We've talked about providing one or more walk-in ADA tent sites along the path down to the river, which could be used by bicyclists.

## **Wallowa Lake State Scenic Corridor**

Ian Matthews discussed cultural resource, natural resource, and visitor experience assessments, then there was a discussion of OPRD-identified needs and development proposals.

*(Advisory Committee member questions and comments with staff responses are paraphrased below)*

Question: What does the scenic corridor signage do?

Staff: It basically identifies the property. It could also help to control camping. And it shows that Minam is part of the scenic corridor.

Comment: In the corridor there are a couple spots where people camp for months at a time - would this plan be an opportunity to address that issue?

Staff: Potentially. One of the primary spots is on ODOT right-of-way, just east of Minam.

Comment: Has there been much input or thought given to formalizing the put-in areas? I've noticed more and more that kayakers are accessing the river all up and down the Corridor.

Staff: There is an informal launch just below the Johnson Timber Wayside that we have discussed formalizing.

Comment: That's about halfway up the river, called "five-mile" where lots of folks put-in the river. It's a great spot but the banks are steep, undercut, there's no gradual put in. There is some signage down there. We put in the five mile marker and use it for rafting.

## Wallowa Lake State Park

Ian Matthews discussed cultural resource, natural resource, and visitor experience assessments, then there was a discussion of OPRD-identified needs and development proposals.

*(Advisory Committee member questions and comments with staff responses are paraphrased below)*

- Question: The identified needs – are they expressed on the conceptual drawings?
- Staff: Most of them, yes. We’ve mapped general development concepts for the whole park, but the marina and day use area have more detailed conceptual design work. After this meeting we will be going back and creating concept designs for the remaining areas where design is needed, such as for the proposed additional yurts.
- Question: We have a bear problem at the park, if there is a way to address the need to manage the food attraction for bears maybe it should be added.
- Staff: That issue is not mentioned here but OPRD is talking about centralized trash and compaction to deal with the problem.
- Staff: Our visitors do not know that the bears are killed if they come to the park. “A fed bear is a dead bear” signs are needed.
- Question: How have you addressed emergency evacuation? Are you talking about acquiring land, what about the land on the west side?
- Staff: We have not talked about acquiring land and this plan would not include that.
- Comment: There is a really big need for it. There is no easy way out especially on the west side of the river. If you look at the big crowds during the holidays, it could end up in a tragedy.
- Staff: We have had discussions with private landowners about emergency access to Lakeshore Dr. but it’s not something we can put in the plan unless agreements are in place.
- Comment: It should be a public access easement for emergency use only.
- Staff: This is a good venue for this discussion and our hope is that the master planning process can help advance progress on issues like these, however, the plan itself will not focus on these types of larger management issues.

Question: Do your camper numbers for the park that you showed earlier refer to total nights or the number of individuals?

Staff: I believe it refers to camper nights. If someone stays at the park for 7 days we record it as 7 not as 1.

Question: What do you think the average stay is?

Staff: We have that information from surveys that have been conducted, but we would have to look it up.

*(note: according to OPRD's 2016 Wallowa Lake State Park Survey, the average stay for overnight users of the park was just under 4 nights)*

Comment: The reason I bring it up is because you said you're not experience growth, and it sounds like if the park is at capacity then expansion would be warranted and I'm trying to understand how the plan addresses that.

Staff: It's not possible to significantly expand camping facilities without impacting visitor experiences in other areas of the park. OPRD's mission doesn't allow us to convert the entire park property into camping facilities because we need to provide for other free recreation experiences as well as resource conservation. Probably the best way to address the capacity issue is to expand shoulder and winter season opportunities, for example, adding more yurts.

Question: We own a large building near the park that is used as an event center, for events like Alpenfest, etc., but the building is not in great shape and I don't see it being viable long term. Wondering if that valuable community use could be transferred to another building, possibly in partnership with OPRD?

Comment: With regard to potential lake level increase, the Associated Ditch companies have consolidated into the Wallowa Irrigation District, which means higher levels of funding are now available, so it's more likely than it was before that raising the water level in the lake could happen. My understanding is that if the level were raised to the maximum allowable, the parking lot at the park would be 6 inches underwater. However, they would spill water over the dam before it got to that level.

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David Stipe presented and discussed detailed design concepts for the Minam Campground and Minam Station.

Question: Does the concept of a loop trail up through Forest Service and Boy Scouts property have a place in this plan?

Staff: That is something that we have discussed with the Forest Service. We hesitate to put it in the plan at this point unless we have all parties involved on the same page. It probably would not impact existing facilities and it could potentially be done outside of the master plan.

Question: The need to inspect boats for invasive species, have you planned for this need in the future?

Staff: Yes that would be at the boat wash.

Question: What happens to the water from the boat wash?

Staff: Goes back into the storm drain. We could pump it to the county's pump station if we had to.

Comment: It would be nice if the boat launch were more convenient. It is a bit away from the traffic.

Staff: Our thought was to locate it next to the fish cleaning station so people could clean fish and wash their boats on the way out.

Question: What about managing people in the river? How do you keep people out of the new channels if the river restoration happens?

Staff: That's mostly a management issue – it wouldn't be something that is addressed in detail in the master plan.

Question: By adding new picnic areas near the river are you encouraging folks to enter the river there?

Staff: That area is already used for picnicking. What's proposed is just an upgrade with paved or hard surface for better accessibility. But the location of these facilities also depends on the restoration project and the potential shift of the channels.

Comment: Would like to see State Parks be more proactive with providing info about bears, kokanee and protecting other resources.

Staff: We do give each camper who registers at the booth a talk about not feeding deer, protecting bears, etc. The kokanee channels are signed right now and people seem to respect the signs.

Comment: I think the idea of remote parking and shuttling-in is a good suggestion.

Question: Scenic resources – would any of the changes change the visual effect of the lake? For example, I would rather not see a playground next to the lake. I want to see the undeveloped shoreline. That is the beauty of it.

Staff: Good point, and we are committed to preserving scenic and natural views in the park. Some of the facilities proposed were relocated, for example, out of the field to reduce visual impact, and parking is proposed to be eliminated from one side of the park road in order to improve views of the lake, but we'll take another look and see if additional design changes are warranted.

Meeting adjourned.