



## *Eastern Oregon Visitors Association*

*15477 Sky Ranch Lane*

*Haines, Oregon 97833*

*Phone: 541-856-3356*

# Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Stakeholders

## Meeting Notes of 10/29/13

**In Attendance:** Chuck Anderson (Alpenfest), Timothy Bishop (Baker County Tourism, HCSB Mktg. Team & EOVA), Brian Walker (Citizen of Enterprise), Janet Dodson (Eagle Cap Excursion Train & Sunny Slope Mktg.), Diane White (Business Owner), Becky Rushton (Joseph Chamber & Business Owner), Julie Sheeler (Divide Camp owner), Mike Buchanan (ODOT), Mike Hayward (Wallowa County Commissioner), Kris Stein (USFS District Ranger Hells Canyon NRA / Eagle Cap Ranger District), Kelly Wick (Joseph Business), Tom Strandberg (ODOT), Paul Arentsen (Winding Waters Rafting), Sara Miller (NEODD), Katy Nesbitt (the Observer), Vicki Searles (Wallowa Chamber, HCSB Mktg. Team & EOVA), Alice Trindle (EOVA)

### **Details of 39 Road Repair:**

What is being Repaired – Kris Stein with USFS described and clarified the details of the contracted surface and sub-surface road repair to be accomplished on the 13-mile segment of FS Road 39 beginning at the junction of Oregon Hwy. 86, north to FS Road 66, also called the Duck Creek/Fish Lake Road. The contract is for \$3.6 million dollars through Federal Highway Administration funds.

Detour - Forest Service Road (FSR) 66 will be the detour route that is available during the closure periods and/or delays, depending on snow levels. FSR 66 begins at the junction of FSR 39 and FSR 66 (sometimes also referred to as Duck Creek, Fish Lake Road, Twin Lakes Road, or Clear Creek Road) and continues west, then south before connecting with Baker County Road 999, just north of Halfway. The detour route is 30 miles in length and is a maintained single-lane gravel road with pullouts. High clearance vehicles are recommended. The route is suitable for vehicles with trailers; however it is not recommended for motor homes. CONCERN: How is the quality of FS 66 Road being maintained and will it include any dust abatement at key locations?)

Schedule – Beginning October 30, 2013 the “construction zone” (i.e. 13-mile segment) will be closed. The contractor will conduct preliminary work until the snow level does not allow for activities.

### Schedule in 2014 –

- October 31, 2013 through June 15, 2014 (basically through the winter); closed on an as-needed basis; (NOTE: Request that when the Byway is officially “open” in the spring, that clarity is given from the USFS to the stakeholders of its status; See Communication Plan)
- June 16 to June 30, 2014: Possible closure Tuesdays through Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m (pst); Open Friday through Monday to allow for campers and other visitors to travel this section of the

byway on the weekends. (NOTE: The road surface will be rough and gravel, therefore travel in the 'Construction Zone' will not be very conducive for travel by motorcycle or bicycle.

- July 1, 2014 to October 15, 2014; visitors can expect up to one hour delays. (REQUEST: Kris is checking to see if a "Commercial Exception" can be negotiated with the contractor and businesses that run on a definite time schedule to accomplish their business, such as Hells Canyon Adventures and Winding Waters Rafting, to allow passage through the 'Construction Zone' to meet schedules.)

Signage – At the time of the meeting Kris only had a draft signage plan. She will share with the group the final plan, and address the following concerns:

- **Coming from the Baker County side** – clarity of the detour at the junction of Hwy 86 and Halfway exit (Baker County Road 999?) of the detour and clearly indicating direction to Hells Canyon dam (continuing on Hwy 86) to avoid visitors thinking that the road to the dam and businesses in the canyon are closed due to road repair.)
- **Coming from the Wallowa County side** – clarity at the junction of Hwy. 82 and Hwy 350 that the Byway is open, but with possible detour and/or delays (Verbiage from Draft: Road Construction 42 miles ahead) ; Request to have further printed/posted information at the kiosk in Joseph on Hwy. 350 (see Communication Plan)

Communication Plan – The group discussed several elements regarding the development of an effect communication plan to keep all partners informed, communicating the correct and consistent message, and maintaining a positive experience for travelers. Key elements included:

- **Development of Maps** – Maps detailing the detour, schedule, and road quality will critical. Two types of maps were discussed:
  - Larger display map – To be utilized at visitor centers and kiosks that provide way-finding along the entire Byway; Hopefully printed on or with a material that is weather resistant; ACTION: Kris will check with USFS; Alice volunteered suggestions regarding materials and printing using the company that developed the panels for the HCSB interpretive kiosks, and suggested some of these kiosks would be appropriate locations; The kiosk in Joseph is critical location for this larger map.
  - Smaller Tablet-style map – This would be used during direct contact with visitors at the local visitor centers and businesses along the byway. It was suggested that the design include the map on one side, and information about many of the other great activities in the region, some still accessible off the portion of the Byway not impacted by the repair. (See Marketing Plan & Budget)
  - Web Map Application – The map should be made available, along with suggested other activities, for application on websites, including: [www.hellscanyonbyway.com](http://www.hellscanyonbyway.com); USFS; ODOT; local DMOs, and stakeholders
- **Reliable Source for up-to-date Schedule/Status** – The group was concerned about developing a single spot for current status reports of the 'Construction Zone' and use of the detour. The Hells Canyon Scenic Byway Marketing Team offered their staff and website url to act as that repository to gather current info on road status along the entire byway, to be updated weekly or as any changes ensue.

Information to be gathered from the contractor, USFS, and ODOT (Trip Check or directly from Tom Strandberg) <http://hellscanyonbyway.com/road-conditions/>

**Marketing Plan** – All stakeholders present voiced the appreciation for this critical road repair and thanked the USFS for pursuing the funding from FHWA. As the Byway is a major economic contributor to businesses in Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties, the stakeholders are keen to develop a clear message that the Byway is OPEN, and there are many great experiences to be discovered along its path and near-by, both winter and summer/fall. Commissioner, Hayward reminded us of the importance of keeping the message to visitors and stakeholders alike in a very positive light.

The HCSB Marketing Team, comprised of Baker County Tourism, Wallowa County Chamber, perhaps Union County Chamber, NHOTIC, and to a small degree, USFS, has a marketing plan developed prior to knowledge about the road repair. EOVA will take on the responsibility of re-working the marketing plan and drafting a suggested budget, ASAP. It was suggested that businesses along the route be requested to assist financially to administrate these marketing activities. Discussions regarding the marketing plan included:

**Messaging** – Keep it Positive! Conveying that the byway is open, but with detour/delays; Many other experiences to discover in NE Oregon; Key discussion was what is the messaging we use to let people know we are still open for business? We want the spin to be positive; That the road is not "closed" but there will be times of detour or delays; That it may not be advisable for motorcycles, bicycles, and motor homes on the detour and/or in the construction zone; That there is a place to find current road conditions ([www.hellscanyonbyway.com](http://www.hellscanyonbyway.com)); and finally that people along the byway are telling a positive story and sending visitors to all the great attractions, including those still accessible along the byway. Consider shaping message around user groups. (i.e. Motorcyclists, bicyclists, RVers) (Pointing out that the detour might be great for dual-purpose motorcycles and/or mountain bikes)

- Sample food-for-thought, regarding tag line:
  - Byway Boosters - Take a Byway Break
  - Break Away from the Byway
  - Hells Canyon Byway Secrets
  - Detours - Delays...Life slows down along HCSB
  - HCSB - It's worth the detour
  - We are on "Byway" Time

**Publications** – In 2014, the reprinting of the Hells Canyon Scenic Byway brochure may have to be reassigned to printing the map tablets. ACTION: Kris is checking on possible assistance from USFS and/or the contractor in helping to pay for the printing of the tablets.

**Social Media/PR** – On-going administration of the current byway Facebook page, and linking to all other stakeholders social media outlets will be critical. Developing a schedule for posts and rich content will be important to convey not only that the byway is open, the repair schedule, but the many other experiences available in the region. Coordinating with ODOT on planned Summer Construction map and PR efforts is critical.

**Hospitality Training** – The creation of “Key Talking Points” to be distributed with all front-line staff of businesses along the byway, along with a button “Ask Me-type” campaign, and trainings in each community will be important.

**Budget** – Contributions from stakeholders, combined with funds from local DMOs will certainly enhance the exposure. EOVA will develop a draft budget to accompany the marketing plan.

## Next Steps / Meeting

Conference Call: December 4, 2013

Beginning at 10:00am (PDT)

Dial: 888-296-6500

Code: 778501

## Agenda:

- Update from USFS/Contractor on any details regarding road repair; Clarification of signage; Clarification of map & tablet development, printing, distribution; Budget
- Review of draft short-term Marketing Plan & Budget
- Discussion of short and long term goals, as drafted below:

### Short-Term Goals –

- Reinstate funding and timeline for Salt Creek to Hwy 350
- Continue marketing

### Long-Term Goals –

- Develop phased timeline for upgrade and then maintenance of all of 39 Road
- Complete interpretive plan
- Develop HCSB as an Oregon Scenic Bikeway and integrate with existing bicycling in Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties

### Short-Term Strategy –

- Develop strong stakeholders group with commitment to serve for next two years
- Develop involvement and buy-in from Oregon congressional representatives
- Develop system and funding to administrate the projects and be the stakeholders advocate

[alpenmeister@znet.com](mailto:alpenmeister@znet.com)

[info@basecampbaker.com](mailto:info@basecampbaker.com)

[loghouservpark@yahoo.com](mailto:loghouservpark@yahoo.com)

[somanygreens@mac.com](mailto:somanygreens@mac.com)

[becky.rushton@live.com](mailto:becky.rushton@live.com)

[dividcamp@charter.net](mailto:dividcamp@charter.net)

[Michael.r.buchanan@odot.state.or.us](mailto:Michael.r.buchanan@odot.state.or.us)

[mhayward@wallowa.or.us](mailto:mhayward@wallowa.or.us)

[krisstein@fs.fed.us](mailto:krisstein@fs.fed.us)

[kgallery@eoni.com](mailto:kgallery@eoni.com)

[Thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us](mailto:Thomas.m.strandberg@odot.state.or.us)

[paul@windingwatersrafting.com](mailto:paul@windingwatersrafting.com)

[saramiller@neoedd.org](mailto:saramiller@neoedd.org)