



**IRTI Steering Committee
April 5, 2012 Meeting Minutes
IDPR Headquarters
Boise, ID**

Participants

Karen Ballard, IDC, Division of Tourism
Dan Buckley, NPS
Bart Butterfield, IDFG
Anne Chambers, IRVCA
Robin Fehlau, BLM
Amy Ferriter, ISDA
Terry Heslin, BLM
Susan Houge-MacKenzie, U of I
Rick Just, IDPR
John Krause, ITD
Vicki Jo Lawson, IRTI
David Olson, USFS, Boise National Forest
Vicky Runnoe, IDFG
Connie Vaughn, IRPA and IDPR
Kendra Witt-Doyle, Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation

The IRTI Steering Committee welcomed two new representatives to the group—Dan Buckley, the new superintendent at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, and Dr. Susan Houge-Mackenzie, Assistant Professor of Recreation and International Engagement Advisory Council member at the University of Idaho.

IRTI BUSINESS

IRTI Finances: FY2012 Project Funding

The Steering Committee reported no problems this fiscal year to date with moving project funds among partners. Robin Fehlau was praised for facilitating the often-difficult GRANTS.GOV process for partners.

IRTI Finances: FY2013 Projects

Three changes to IRTI projects are anticipated in FY2013:

1. An additional project, the “Parks Perks” benefit/discount card and program, will be included in IRTI’s FY2013 project list and budget. At a minimum, IDPR and IDC Division of Tourism will fund the project to complement the new State Parks Passport. “Parks Perks” will be available to people purchasing an annual State Parks Passport, and will include coupons and discounts at recreation- and tourism-related businesses throughout Idaho that choose to participate, as well as a coupon for a State Parks fee-free day for a friend. IDPR did not have statutory authority to create such a program, so Tourism is assisting. Other agencies/partners are invited to participate if they like.
2. Bart Butterfield suggested that a little less funding may be necessary to maintain the Outfitter and Guide GIS project next year. He agreed to consult with Jake Howard regarding this and report back.
3. Karen Ballard suggested that less funding may be needed for call center and fulfillment operations in the future due to the way in which visitors currently are seeking and receiving information.

Anne Chambers anticipates that the Idaho CG Directory project costs will be the same in FY2013.

Vicki Lawson alerted agency representatives and working group leads that she will be calling them within the next few weeks to confirm projects, project funding, and agency contributions in order to finalize the FY2013 IRTI budget by the beginning of the state fiscal year, July 1.

IRTI Coordinator Position

Vicki Lawson reported that she has enjoyed serving as the IRTI Coordinator for the past five years, but plans to retire by the end of the calendar year. Since the IRTI Coordinator position has turned over only once in 25 years, there are few

protocols in place regarding recruitment and selection. Vicki agreed to help the Steering Committee identify suitable candidates, with the expectation to name and discuss such folks at the August IRTI meeting.

IRTI PROJECT UPDATES

State Parks Passport

Rick Just reported that the State Legislature unanimously passed legislation establishing the Idaho State Parks Passport. Beginning January 2013, Idahoans can purchase a windshield sticker Passport each time that they renew their vehicle registration. It will cost \$10 for a one-year Passport and \$20 for a two-year Passport, tied to the vehicle registration period. The Passport will provide: unlimited daytime entry to all 30 State Parks and Recreation areas, including boat launches; nightly discounts on camping; and a sustainable funding source for Idaho's State Parks. IDPR anticipates that 60% of Idaho households will opt-in to purchase the Passport. ITD will charge a 7% administrative fee; the Passport sticker and other related materials will cost \$0.21/Passport; and County DMV charges to administer the program are uncertain as of now.

Be Outside, Idaho! (BOI)

BOI Co-chairs, Vicky Runnoe and Kendra Witt, reported that BOI will help sponsor "Unplug and Be Outside" week on April 21-28. Piloted last year in Boise, this year's event will expand to the broader Treasure Valley, Idaho Falls, and North Idaho. This is a signature event for the National Children and Nature Network, of which BOI is a part. The Governor will be signing a proclamation urging kids to unplug and be outside; the First Lady will participate in a kick-off event on April 24. The City of Moscow may participate next year. Susan MacKenzie suggested that the U of I would like to participate and likely could get students involved in helping host the event. Kendra explained that Blue Cross Foundation, which is helping fund participating cities, could also help fund U of I's participation. Kendra and Susan agreed to explore this further. Dan Buckley added that "Unplug" week is also National Parks week, with free entry to National Parks available. Kendra offered to include this on the "Unplug" website. Rick Just offered to include "Unplug" week information on the Friends of State Parks website. The Co-chairs underscored the goal for "Unplug and Be Outside" week to become a statewide event, with all communities participating each year. The schedule of this year's events for each location can be found at: <http://www.unplugandbeoutside.com>.

On March 22, BOI hosted Rotunda Day at the State Capitol in an effort to thank legislators for their support of BOI, and to keep them apprised of the need for and accomplishments of BOI. Meggan Laxalt-Mackey organized the successful effort.

Vicky Runnoe reported that remaining BOI funding from the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation auction from two years ago will be moved to the Idaho Community Foundation which is serving as a fiscal sponsor for BOI.

Upcoming efforts: BOI may help sponsor this year's Green Expo in Boise. BOI is working on a "prescription" poster and prescription pad for use in medical settings. To help with this, Karen Ballard offered to share some of Tourism's graphics developed for a previous advertising campaign for "Vitamin ID".

OHV Travel Management and Stay on Trails campaign

Dave Olson reported that this year's *Stay on Trails* campaign will reflect an approximate 30% reduction in funding over last year. The spring campaign will include live reads on radio during April, May, and early June; a tagline on Facebook; funding for Google to place *Stay on Trails* information earlier in relevant web searches; and development of new ride descriptions for inclusion on the *Stay on Trails* website. Dave observed that the campaign partners still struggle with how to reach "rogue riders", independent riders who are not members of any OHV organization. The *Stay on Trails* website can be found at <http://www.stayontrails.com>, and the state trail map website can be found at <http://www.trails.idaho.gov>.

Watchable Wildlife (WW)

Vicky Runnoe reported that the "Bird by Bird" program is now in 11 classrooms and 1 assisted-living senior care facility. Seniors, like students, will be engaged in watching and identifying birds and entering their observations into an IDFG database. Periodically, IDFG will push the data to Ebird, a national database. Partners in this project include IDFG, BLM, USFWS, Golden Eagle Audubon, and Wild Birds Unlimited. WW is working on a new website for the "Bird by Bird" program.

WW will introduce the Idaho Nature Backpack Program this spring. Applications for participation will be available within the next month. Modeled after a South Dakota Game, Fish, and Park's program, the application process will

provide licensed, year-round childcare facilities and in-home childcare providers with nature backpacks filled with age-appropriate items to encourage daily outdoor exploration and discovery. In addition to the backpack, successful applicants will receive a binder with ideas for activities to utilize the backpacks and to aid in related classroom activities. This first year, 50 backpacks will be awarded to local childcare facilities. When the program is fully implemented, every childcare facility in Idaho will have and use such backpacks.

WW will offer informational material and hands-on activities during the celebration of International Migratory Bird Day on May 12 at the M-K Nature Center in Boise. A new WW poster depicting a nocturnal theme will be available soon. Deniz Aygen, WW Chairperson, encourages everyone to contribute articles for the quarterly Windows to Wildlife newsletter. The latest issue is due out this week.

Outfitter and Guide GIS Mapping Project

Bart Butterfield reported that the outfitter and guide database, mapping, and website project now is in maintenance mode. Licensed and permitted outfitters and guides, activities, timeframes, and permitted boundaries are digitized and kept current. Personnel problems that Bart reported earlier that impacted the ability to keep the data current have been resolved. The outfitter and guide site can be found at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/ioglb>. Karen Ballard added that the VisitIdaho.org site developers utilized data from this project to provide tourism-focused, water-based outfitter and guide information, and, now are developing land-based outfitter and guide information for tourists with this same data.

Free Fishing Day

Vicky Runnoe reported that Free Fishing Day in Idaho will be on June 9. "Take Me Fishing" trailers will be out across the state, and family-oriented fishing activities will be occurring throughout Idaho.

Scenic Byways

John Krause reported that the federal highway program, pending reauthorization, has been extended only until June 30. Currently, there is a moratorium on designating any new national scenic byways and the national byway information center, America's Byway Resource Center, has been eliminated. Even if the program is reauthorized to include funding for scenic byways, John forecasts that only national scenic byways may be eligible for funding. This could be problematic given that only 6 of Idaho's 30 scenic byways have national designation.

Even though there are no new national byways possible at this time, there is a proposal for an Idaho byway, the Lower Payette River Heritage Byway ("52 Miles on Idaho 52"), which extends from Emmett to Horseshoe Bend. In addition, there is interest by folks in Riggins to develop the Salmon River Recreational and Historic Byway, which would extend from New Meadows to Grangeville. This would be the first "recreational" byway in Idaho.

John discussed an effort to update Idaho's byway promotion and marketing plan that would include revamping the current brochure, developing a byway map (Karen suggested that the need may be met by better utilization of the current Idaho highway map), creating a byway phone app, providing better byway and traveler information signage at rest areas, and integrating all of these efforts with the web-based byway information. John intends to develop a project plan and budget for the promotion and marketing plan by the end of April. Karen Ballard requested that the IRTI Steering Committee be available to review new rest area signs and the next Idaho highway map to make sure that the messaging is accurate, relevant, and useful to each partner agency/organization. The Steering Committee was agreeable.

The Idaho byway video project has resulted in 20 hours of video footage. Additional footage of background interviews and drive-alongs will be recorded this spring and summer. Idaho Public Television still plans to complete and broadcast the one-hour, *Outdoor Idaho* special on Scenic Byways in March 2013 during the PBS funding campaign. John suggested that the Idaho Scenic Byway Advisory Committee and the IRTI Steering Committee may be invited to answer donation phone calls during the broadcast.

Idaho submitted scenic byway grant requests to the FY2012 National Scenic Byway Program in January. Those awards are expected to be announced in May.

Dave Olson reported that the Boise National Forest is updating the Ponderosa Pine Scenic Byway Auto Tour. John and Karen Ballard discussed the possibility of producing and offering the auto tour as a mobile app and/or as a podcast available for download from the visitidaho.org website.

Idaho Campground Directory (Directory)

Anne Chambers reported that the Directory is a highly targeted brochure. In fact, 27% of the tourism inquiries received in Idaho includes a request for a Directory. Anne noted that most of these 27% are out-of-staters!

Anne observed that camping remains a bright spot in the economy, as revealed in a recent study done by the Outdoor Foundation, Coleman, and KOA (<http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/research.camping.2011.html>). Currently, 8.9 million U.S. households own an RV. In 2012, it is expected that RV sales will increase by 5.1%. Anne noted that camping is considered by many experts to be recession-proof, with camping and camping gear among the top ten recession-proof segments of the economy!

Recreation-Tourism Databases, Websites, and Information Fulfillment

Karen Ballard reported that there has been “slippage” on visitation to the VisitIdaho.org websites. This likely is due to social media taking the place of website use. She notes fewer requests for hard copy Travel Guides and other by-snailmail information requests. In response to this trend, IOGA is considering not printing its brochure next year. Karen is exploring the possibility of making the Travel Guide available as a mobile/notebook application via cloud computing.

Phone call inquiries have been minimal through the winter, but are beginning to increase. Karen hopes to be able to keep up with the volume and retain the call-center in-house at Tourism, rather than having to go out with another contract.

Idaho Conference on Recreation and Tourism Conference (ICORT)

The 2012 ICORT will be held May 8-10 in Coeur d’Alene. Conference themes will focus on customer service and reputation management. Dr. Emilyn Sheffield, from California State University at Chico and the California Recreation Roundtable, will be one of the keynotes. Her high-energy, thought-provoking presentation will be sponsored by the BLM. (Thanks, Robin Fehlau!) There are 120 people registered for the conference already. The Lieutenant Governor may participate in this year’s conference.

State Visitor Centers (VCs)

Karen Ballard reported that the Division of Tourism is in discussion with ITD regarding how best to fund the VCs. The new VC at Dubois has not contacted Tourism regarding the need for any operations funds.

NEW/OTHER BUSINESS AND AGENCY UPDATES

Idaho Recreation and Parks Association (IRPA) Conference

Connie Vaughn reported that the IRPA will partner with the Montana Recreation and Parks Association (MTRPA) this year to host jointly an annual conference on September 25-29 in Missoula, MT, with the theme of “Outside and Active”. The intent is to move the conference back to Idaho in 2013, continue the partnership with MTRPA, and include the Idaho Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance in the 2013 conference, as well.

Doug Eastwood, IRPA’s President, is working on an exhibit for use at ICORT, which will include a photo collage of tourism-attracting, recreation events hosted by Idaho cities.

Grant/Funding Webinars

John Krause announced that ITD will be hosting monthly webinars/teleconference events on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, from 11 am to noon (Mountain Time), focused on federally funded, state-funded, and private grant opportunities. Anyone is welcome to participate. Participants can engage over the internet for both the video and audio portions of the meeting OR can engage by phone only. Here is connection information for both options:

1. Click here: <https://connect4.us.att.com/soi/meet/?ExEventID=8205552>
2. If prompted to install client software, choose the “Web participant Client”.
3. Once you are configured and have joined the conference, select an option to attach to the audio portion of the conference through your computer.
4. To connect to the audio link through a phone, dial toll-free (in US): 888-706-6468.
5. When prompted, enter the meeting access code: 4121118#

6. Prior to the meeting that you plan to participate in, email your interest in participating to ITD at ITDPDTeam@itd.idaho.gov . This will allow ITD to send you any material to be covered in the webinar prior to the start of the conference.

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

Dan Buckley identified several issues currently being addressed by Park staff:

- Due to the devastating White-nose Syndrome disease currently affecting bats, all but five of Crater's 72 caves will be closed, with access restricted in the open caves. Although the disease has not yet been identified this far west, park staff are working on a robust cave management plan to be completed by the end of the year.
- Highway signage directing visitors to the Monument needs to be improved.
- There is some interest in acquiring National Park (NP) status for the Monument portion for the unit. Dan plans to work with local chambers to gauge interest in these circles. Dan agreed to send to the Steering Committee some research on the economic benefits of NP status.
- The 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act is coming up in 2014. The Wilderness portion of Craters was one of the first Wildernesses established on National Park Service lands (in 1970), so it is likely that celebration events will be associated with this.

DATE FOR NEXT IRTI STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, August 16, 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Boise.

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