

Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) Steering Group December 4, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Participants

Karen Ballard, IDC-Tourism

Bart Butterfield, IDFG

Anne Chambers, ID RV Campground Owners' Association

Krystal Clair, BOR

Jeremy Chase, Drake Cooper (formerly ES Drake)

Sara Focht, IDFG

Steve Frost, IDPR

Terry Heslin, BLM

Jake Howard, IOGLB

Rick Just, IDPR

Mike Keckler, IDFG

Jim Keller, USFS

Vicki Jo Lawson, IRTI

Meggan Laxalt-Mackey, USFWS

Peg Owens, IDC-Tourism

Vicky Runnoe, IDFG

Dean Sangrey, IDPR

Jennifer Wernex, IDPR

Garry Young, ITD

Steering Group Membership (A list of current contact information for Steering Group members and Working Group leads is attached. (See page 6.)

Carl Wilgus, former Director of Tourism for the Idaho Department of Commerce (IDC) and a valued IRTI Steering Group member, has left after 20 years to take a new position serving as executive director of the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau in Pennsylvania. We will miss Carl, and we wish him well!

Karen Ballard has been named as the new IDC Director of Tourism. Karen joined the Idaho tourism division for a newly created tourism development position in 1992, specializing in bringing international travelers to Idaho. In addition to international tourism, Karen has been active in cultural tourism, including the Lewis and Clark celebration. We look forward to working with Karen!

Dick Smith, Boise National Forest (NF) Supervisor, will be retiring Jan. 3. Boise NF is planning a celebration in his honor on Jan. 4. Frank Guzman, Deputy Forest Supervisor, will be acting until a new Supervisor is selected.

Robin Fehlau has been selected to fill Kay Schiepan's position at the BLM Idaho State Office. Robin will be arriving from the BLM Utah State Office in January.

There was a suggestion to invite the Division of Aeronautics to participate as an IRTI partner. Garry Young agreed to extend the invitation.

Summary of discussions with IRTI Steering Group members

During the past 6 weeks, Vicki Lawson has visited with each of the Steering Group members and others in their agencies/organizations to determine what the Group's expectations are for IRTI. A one-page summary of these discussions is attached. (See page 7.) In response to some of the issues raised in the summary:

- The Steering Group agreed that a "face-time" report-out with the partner agency executives once a year regarding IRTI's mission and accomplishments may be helpful. Vicki Lawson agreed to pursue this.
- Rick Just pointed out that a State-wide directory of boating sites was developed some years ago, but it proved to be too costly to continue and was utilized by few. He emphasized that boating facilities don't change much from year to year. However, boating sites could be included in the State-wide, on-line trails mapping project which, likely, will include all recreation facilities when completed.
- Vicki Lawson agreed to implement the requested "refinements" suggested by the Steering Group, including:
 - Produce a beefier, more consistently detailed annual accomplishments report.
 - Produce beefier Steering Group meeting minutes.
 - Hand-deliver the annual budget to Directors for signature, rather than relying on Steering Group members to move it from Director to Director.
- The Steering Group agreed to pressure field folks for timely updates for the recreation facility/attraction database.

IRTI Objectives and History

The Steering Group reviewed the one-page IRTI Objectives and History document. A minor edit was suggested. The updated version is attached. (See page 8.)

IRTI Operating Guidelines

The Steering Group reviewed the one-page IRTI Operating Guidelines document. No changes were suggested. The current version is attached. (See page 9.)

A concern regarding the project “banker” responsibilities was emphasized. If there are changes regarding which agency/organization will serve as a project banker, the affected agency/organization Steering Group member should be notified as soon as possible, since new agreements may need to be forged. Such agreements often require a lot of lead time.

Dean Sangrey agreed to let the Steering Group know who will be IDPR’s point person for financial matters.

IRTI Coordinator Job Description

The Steering Group reviewed the one-page IRTI Coordinator Job Description. A minor edit was suggested. The updated version is attached. (See page 10.)

Idaho Governor’s Conference on Recreation and Tourism

Peg Owens reported that the Governor’s Conference is scheduled for May 6-7 at the Red Lion Hotel in Pocatello. The theme will be geo-tourism, and the keynote speaker will be from National Geographic. Field trips are planned to Massacre Rocks, Lava Hot Springs, Fort Hall, etc., and there will be a golf tournament. No announcements are out yet. The next planning meeting is scheduled for January 16 in Pocatello. The contact is Rebecca Satter at the Pocatello Chamber of Commerce (208-233-7333 or rsatter@pocatelloidaho.com). The Forest Service will have a representative at the next meeting.

Free Fishing Day

Vicky Runnoe reported that Free Fishing Day is scheduled for June 7. Each Region will plan special events associated with the activity. There is some discussion about having a Free Fishing Weekend, starting in 2009, as Washington does. International Migratory Bird Day is scheduled for May 10. There is a different theme each year, and it will dovetail with activities at the Foothills Learning Center, M-K Nature Center, and Zoo Boise.

Outfitter and Guide GIS project

Jake Howard and Bart Butterfield reported on the status of mapping outfitter and guide operating areas:

- All of the “consumptive” operating areas are mapped.
- Mapping of the “non-consumptive” operating areas continues, but is difficult because some boundaries are vague.
- Private lands operating areas have not yet been mapped in an effort to protect private land interests.
- ES Drake folks are working to integrate this website with the Visitidaho.org site by this spring. Eventually, this site also will be integrated with IDFG’s hunt planner site.
- ID Commerce folks have encouraged including ALL outfitters and guides in the project, not just those whom are members of Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association (IOGA).
- Agencies will need to figure out how to use this site to meet specific needs. It was noted that it will be especially useful during fire season.
- The link for the existing site is: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/ioglb/>.
- In FY2009, this project primarily will be in a maintenance mode. Also, efforts will be made to complete “non-consumptive” operating area mapping and linking to other sites. It is anticipated that \$6,500 (same as in FY2008) will be needed for this project in FY2009.

Watchable Wildlife

Sara Focht distributed recently released statistics from the USFWS National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. They reveal that participation in hunting and fishing in Idaho diminished in 2006

from 2001 levels; participation in watchable wildlife activities, both at home and away from home, increased in Idaho in 2006 from 2001 levels. The complete survey results are available at <http://federalaid.fws.gov/surveys/surveys.html>.

Sara wants to know of any events or locations where the portable Watchable Wildlife booth could be used. She will bring the exhibit if you contact her.

Sara emphasized the need for NPS representation on the Watchable Wildlife Committee. Vicki Lawson anticipates that a NPS representative will attend the next IRTI meeting.

Sara mentioned two meetings/events of interest:

- A sub-committee of interagency folks from the Watchable Wildlife Working Group will be meeting on Dec. 19 to discuss a series of radio spots, “Your Day Outdoors”, designed to get kids outside.
- The Idaho Environmental Education Association annual conference will be on February 29 - March 1 in Boise. The theme will be “Go Local: Exploring your Backyard”. Participants will work on weaving messages for schools.

Vicki Runnoe reported that IDFG is working on an especially-for-kids website, as a part of the IDFG site. The website theme is designed to get kids to get outside. The site will be ready in 2008.

Idaho RV Campground Directory

Anne Chambers reported that the 2008 RV Campground Directories are available; 150,000 have been printed. This year, the Directories are packaged in boxes of 125, rather than 200, so that each site can receive precisely the needed amount. Anne urged everyone to review the data relevant to sites that they manage to ensure accuracy. Also, Anne would like to know how many Directories are left undistributed at the end of each year. She noted that 35,000 were mailed last year in response to internet requests; most were sent out-of-state.

Scenic Byways

Garry Young reported that a new Byway has been designated. The Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway is 53 miles long and parallels the Snake River in southwestern Idaho. In addition, the Western Heritage Historic Byway and the Fort Henry Historic Byway have been extended. These additions will be reflected in the upcoming March edition of the Scenic Byway brochure, as well as on the website.

No decisions have been made to date regarding the FY2007 grant proposals. The FY2008 round of grants won't be announced until January or February. Garry intends to work on a consolidated submission for a suite of interpretive projects across the State, probably totaling \$500,000. Garry believes that this strategy will make the projects more competitive. He will be asking for projects to be identified when the FY2008 grants are announced.

SCORPT

Rick Just reported that the National Park Service provided two pages of comments on the 2006-2010 Idaho SCORPT document. It is now awaiting the Governor's signature. After it is signed, Rick will reconfigure the website. Rick anticipates that we will need to reconvene the SCORPT working group next summer or fall to start working on the 2011-2015 SCORPT. He won't be requesting an NPS grant to help fund the next round of work.

Public Information Systems

Jeremy Chase and Peg Owens reported that all recreation/tourism “niche” sub-sites, such as winter recreation, are being put under the parent “flagship” site, visitidaho.org. This is intended to make the information more accessible, easier to maintain, and to keep visitors within the visitidaho.org site. The new winter recreation site was launched one month ago. Jeremy will be updating the Scenic Byways and OHV sites next. Here are some very encouraging top line metrics associated with the visitidaho.org site:

- From the site's re-launch in April until November 30, there were 565,000 unique visitors, averaging 7 pages per visit.
- Most requested content are (1) maps, (2) photos, (3) images.

- The site has received rave reviews, except from folks who have dial-up connections. However, site statistics show only 4% of traffic came from folks using dial-up connections.

OHV Travel Management

Terry Heslin reported that the Idaho OHV Committee hasn't met recently, but hopes to meet in January. The radio spots, PSAs, and billboards have been received with some enthusiasm, and have had a lot of market penetration. In fact, an interagency OHV group in Utah plans to build a similar campaign for Utah based on Idaho's success.

Terry suggested that in FY2009 the campaign may need some "freshening up" and may need to address an additional audience, school age children. Steve Frost indicated that IDPR is already doing some work to achieve a similar objective. He said that IDPR has an education specialist working on OHV education for kids. The program hasn't been marketed yet, but it will be soon. He said that this effort will put IDPR in a good position if mandatory OHV education becomes mandatory.

Steve added that IDPR has a portable education booth (trailer) with OHV exhibits that served about 10,000 kids this past year. Vicky Runnoe suggested that this trailer may be useful at Cabela's Store, since IDFG is frequently asked to provide similar interpretation/education opportunities at the store. Steve agreed to follow up. Also, Steve offered to make the trailer available at the next IRTI Steering Group meeting.

State-wide On-line Trail Mapping

Steve Frost reported that public desire for a good OHV map is partially in response to FS implementation of the OHV Rule, and to the fact that OHV Travel Maps are not useful for navigation (and difficult to fold, as demonstrated by Steve!). The Uinta NF in Utah has prototyped an on-line map, much like Idaho would benefit from. Steve anticipates that the map would start with an OHV route layer on a Google Earth-like base, and add subsequent layers, including trails for all uses and recreation and tourism facilities/attractions. Steve will be hosting a meeting in January of recreation and data folks from each agency to discuss protocols, costs, opportunities for consistency, status of data, etc. A \$500,000 FY2009 budget request to fund this project has been submitted to the State Legislature. Steve and Joe Gallagher, FS Intermountain Region OHV Program Coordinator, are drafting a white paper about this project.

FY2009 IRTI Operating Plan

Ongoing projects to be included in the FY2009 IRTI Operating Plan (budget):

- **Recreation Information Fulfillment** (formerly called "1-800")
- **Tourism-Recreation Databases Maintenance** (formerly called "Information Manager")
- **Campground Directory**
- **Free Fishing Day**
- **Watchable Wildlife** Sara Focht anticipates that this project may require less partner funding in FY2009 than in FY2008.
- **OHV Travel Management** Terry Heslin anticipates that the same amount of funding will be needed for this project in FY2009 as in FY2008.
- **Scenic Byway Brochure** Garry Young anticipates that Federal Highway funds will no longer be available for the brochures. Partners, including ITD, will likely have to fund more in FY2009 than in FY2008.
- **Outfitter and Guide GIS Maintenance** Bart Butterfield anticipates that the same amount of funding will be needed in FY2009 as in FY2008.
- **IRTI Coordinator**

New projects to be included:

- **On-line Trail and Recreation Mapping** (formerly called "Idaho Access Guide") This project has morphed significantly, so it may be considered a new project. The amount of funding needed for this project is uncertain; funds will be sought from the 2008 State Legislature.
- **Kids and Nature Initiative** The Watchable Wildlife Working Group will draft a proposal for this project, including a funding request, if necessary. This project may include developing a local chapter of "Children in Nature Network", hosting "See Idaho" events, focusing on children and young adults, etc. It was noted that many agencies/organizations are working on projects aimed at connecting children with nature, but

there is nothing currently weaving these efforts together. This project could provide such an umbrella, compounding the effectiveness of each effort. Vicky Runnoe noted that federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation has a rider called *No Child Left Inside* that, if it passes, would put environmental education back in schools. She observed that if it passes, school personnel likely would come to the natural resource agencies for help.

Open Discussion/New Business

There was consensus that IRTI does not need a website, but that it would be helpful to have some IRTI materials posted on the web. To that end, Rick Just offered to post some information on the SCORPT site, and Peg Owens offered to post materials on the internal Tourism site. Vicki Lawson will provide electronic versions of the materials, including IRTI History and Objectives, IRTI Operating Guidelines, IRTI Annual Reports, IRTI Operating Plans, the IRTI letterhead graphic when it is ready, etc.

Terry Heslin reported that the national BLM budget formulation theme, beginning in FY2009, is “community growth”. It will reflect that the great American outback that the BLM manages impacts and is impacted by community growth.

Date for Next IRTI Steering Group Meeting

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 9 am – 1 pm

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Headquarters, 5657 Warm Springs Avenue, Boise, ID

(Hosting the meeting at other locations was discussed, but the Steering Group prefers the IDPR location because of the ease of parking.)

Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI)
Current Steering Group Members(*), Working Group Leads(+), and Other Contacts

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

*+Terry Heslin (prior to January 2008): 208-373-3836; terry_heslin@blm.gov

*Robin Fehlau (after January 2008): 208-373-3825; robin_fehlau@blm.gov

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

*Scott Short: 208-383-2218; sshort@pn.usbr.gov

*Krystal Clair: 208-383-2211; kclair@pn.usbr.gov

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

*Karen Ballard: 208-334-2470; karen.ballard@tourism.idaho.gov

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IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

+Bart Butterfield: 208-287-2722; bbutterfield@idfg.idaho.gov

*Mike Keckler: 208-287-2870; mkeckler@idfg.idaho.gov

+Vickie Runnoe: 208-287-2874; vrunnoe@idfg.idaho.gov

+Sara Focht: 208-287-2750; sfocht@idfg.idaho.gov

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

+Steve Frost: 208-514-2410; sfrost@idpr.idaho.gov

*+Rick Just: 208-514-2480; rjust@idpr.idaho.gov

*Dean Sangrey: 208-514-2260; dsangrey@idpr.idaho.gov

*Jennifer Wernex: 208-514-2254; jwernex@idpr.idaho.gov

IDAHO OUTFITTERS AND GUIDE LICENSING BOARD

*Jake Howard: 208-327-7380; jhoward@oglb.state.id.us

IDAHO RV CAMPGROUND ASSOCIATION

* + Anne Chambers: 208-345-6009; anne@rvidaho.org

IDAHO TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

*+Garry Young: 208-334-8214; garry.young@itd.idaho.gov

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

*Doug Neighbor: 208-527-3257, ext. 101; doug_neighbor@nps.gov

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

*Meggan Laxalt: 208-378-5243; meggan_laxalt@fws.gov

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

*Dick Smith: 208-373-4102; dicksmith@fs.fed.us

*Jim Keller: 208-373-4142; jbkeller@fs.fed.us

IDAHO RECREATION AND TOURISM INITIATIVE

Vicki Jo Lawson; 208-514-2262; vlawson@idpr.idaho.gov

Summary of Discussions with IRTI Steering Group Members

Expectations for IRTI

- IRTI serves as a multi-agency issue/opportunity sounding board.
- IRTI provides a place to air ideas and get initial support for multi-agency projects.
- IRTI is a forum for the exchange of ideas.
- IRTI facilitates communication among agencies.
- Many Steering Group members acknowledged that not everything that happens at the IRTI table is directly relevant to their agency, but they are there anyway, because the issues that *are* directly relevant are important.
- Private sector members genuinely appreciate the opportunity to see the collaborative side of the agencies.
- Overall, IRTI is meeting expectations of Steering Group members.

New opportunities for IRTI to consider

- Look for opportunities for more unified messaging across agencies (e.g., a campaign to reconnect kids with nature).
- Look for opportunities to use public lands to meet national fitness goals, while providing for recreation and tourism.
- Use the “collaborative mass” of IRTI to leverage more non-agency funds, services, and projects for each other.
- Increase IRTI’s visibility and re-energize. A “face-time” report-out with the partner agency executives once a year regarding mission and accomplishments may be helpful.
- Create web-based, on-demand State-wide trail/route maps.
- Produce a State-wide directory that includes boating sites.

Refinements to consider

- There needs to be a good understanding of IRTI’s mission.
- There needs to be a beefier, more detailed “accomplishments list” than the current Operating Plan Summary provides. The new Annual Accomplishment Report is better, though the descriptions of projects are inconsistent.
- It would be better if the IRTI Coordinator would bring the annual budget around to be signed by the Directors, rather than relying on the Steering Group members to move it from Director to Director.
- IRTI Steering Group members need to pressure field folks for timely updates for the recreation facility/attraction data.
- IRTI Steering Group meeting minutes need to be beefed up because they are sent widely.

Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) Objectives and History

The Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) is a coalition of state and federal agencies and others dedicated to providing Idaho citizens and visitors with expanded recreation opportunities. IRTI's primary objective is to develop partnerships and cooperate with any and all interested agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals in order to improve public information and services associated with recreation and tourism opportunities in Idaho. Simply, the coalition strives to make it easy for people to come outside and play. By working together, the coalition is able to provide information and services in a more effective manner.

The IRTI was created in 1988 as a spin-off from the U.S. Forest Service National Recreation Strategy. The strategy complemented both the White House Task Force Report on Outdoor Recreation and the State of Idaho's efforts to enhance travel promotion and outdoor recreation. The 1987 Idaho Leisure Travel and Recreation Study, sponsored by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Department of Commerce, and the University of Idaho, was aimed at improving tourism marketing and outdoor recreation opportunities. The 1988 White House Task Force Report called for improved cooperation among local, federal, and private organizations. Initial IRTI partners were Idaho Department of Commerce, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, and the U.S. Forest Service. These agencies soon were joined by the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Transportation Department, and National Park Service. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service joined in 2005. Other partners include/have included the Idaho RV Campground Association, Idaho Association of Outfitters and Guides, Idaho Power Company, University of Idaho, Audubon Society, and Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board.

Early leaders in developing IRTI included Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Director Yvonne Ferrell, National Forest Supervisors Ron Stoleson and Bill Morden, Idaho Department of Commerce's Tourism Development Director Carl Wilgus, Bureau of Land Management's George Weiskircher, and Bureau of Reclamation's Jim Budolfson.

A Steering Group composed of representatives of the partners governs IRTI. There is a coordinator position that provides staff support to the Steering Group. The group meets 3-4 times each year and operates on the State fiscal year starting July 1. Jack Lavin filled the Coordinator role from 1988 until October 2007. Vicki Lawson is the current Coordinator.

Some of the more noteworthy accomplishments of IRTI include:

- initiated the on-going annual Governor's Conference on Recreation and Tourism;
- created the State Scenic Byway System;
- facilitated the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan in becoming a multi-agency product;
- produced two editions of the Idaho Wildlife Viewing Guide Book;
- published an ongoing annual Campground Directory listing all private, state, and federal facilities in Idaho; and
- improved the spirit of cooperation and partnership among all recreation and tourism interests within Idaho.

Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) Operating Guidelines

Each IRTI Steering Group Member is responsible for adhering to his/her agency's laws and fiscal regulations.

Each IRTI Steering Group Member should recognize and respect the laws and fiscal regulations of the partner agencies.

IRTI operates on the State of Idaho fiscal year schedule – July 1 through June 30. Federal partners operate on a fiscal year that begins October 1 and ends September 30.

The IRTI Steering Group is the decision-making authority for the IRTI. This includes determining which statewide projects are to be included as line items in the annual operating plan/budget.

The IRTI Coordinator provides staff support to the IRTI Steering Group.

Projects approved in the annual operating plan/budget are accomplished by project-specific working groups composed of representatives from the involved agencies.

An agency's IRTI Steering Group Member may be a different person from that agency's representative on a project-specific working group. If this is the case, it is important that the two people communicate well. Agency financial commitments can only be made by the Agency representative on the IRTI Steering Group.

Each project, shown in the annual IRTI budget, will have one agency designated as "Banker".

Banker responsibilities include collecting and dispersing funds obligated to the projects described in the IRTI annual operating plan/budget. It is important that Banker agencies bill the partners early in the fiscal year, since funds sometimes are not available later in the year.

Job Description

Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) Coordinator

The Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative (IRTI) is a coalition of state and federal agencies and others dedicated to providing Idaho citizens and visitors with many and varied recreation opportunities. The coalition strives to make it easy for people to come outside and play.

Idaho has a multitude of land management agencies and recreation providers whose roles can be confusing to the public. By working jointly, the coalition is able to provide information and services in a more effective manner. Recreationists and tourists don't care who manages a campsite – they just want to camp. They are not especially interested in which agency manages a wildlife area – they just want to see wildlife. To accommodate needs such as these, IRTI has facilitated these things: a statewide campground directory, a statewide scenic byway system, a statewide wildlife viewing guide, and an annual Governor's conference on recreation and tourism.

IRTI partners include Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Idaho Department of Commerce, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Transportation Department, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service. In addition, other public and private entities participate in various projects. A Steering Group composed of one representative from each partner agency governs IRTI. The IRTI Coordinator provides staff support to the IRTI Steering Group. The Steering Group approves statewide work projects and the annual budget. The annual IRTI budget is funded by contributions from various partner agencies.

There are many more agency partnership projects accomplished at the local park, forest, management area, and district levels that do not involve the IRTI Steering Committee. However, the Coordinator is available, upon request from local entities, to assist with advice and counsel.

The Coordinator position is housed at the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation headquarters in Boise, and reports to the Department's Division Administrator of Operations. The Coordinator work priorities are set by the IRTI Steering Group. One of the Steering Group goals is to institutionalize the on-going projects so that, aside from funding, the individual, project-specific work groups run them. The Coordinator has a general knowledge and respect for the laws and regulations guiding each partner agency. The Coordinator identifies potential conflicts and works with the Steering Group or project-specific working group to resolve them. The Coordinator acts as a focal point for receiving and distributing information that facilitates the partner agencies in providing improved public service in outdoor recreation and tourism. The Coordinator represents IRTI at meetings and conferences relating to outdoor recreation and tourism.

The Coordinator is responsible for making arrangements for the periodic meetings of the Steering Group, including meeting space reservations and agenda preparation. The Coordinator drafts and sends meeting minutes within ten days of the meeting. The Coordinator assembles the annual IRTI budget from data provided from the partner agencies, including getting agency directors' approval signatures. The Coordinator is available as a staff resource for agency employees and others on matters pertaining to recreation and tourism in Idaho.