



IRTI Steering Group August 12, 2008 Meeting Minutes

Participants

Karen Ballard, IDC-Division of Tourism
Andy Brunelle, FS
Bart Butterfield, IDFG
Anne Chambers, ID RV Campgrounds Association
Krystal Clair, BOR
Robin Fehlau, BLM
Sara Focht, IDFG
Terry Jarrell, FS
Jennifer Johnson, Bogus Basin Recreational Association
Rick Just, IDPR

Mike Keckler, IDFG
Jim Keller, FS
Vicki Jo Lawson, IRTI
Gary McElheney, ITD-Division of Aeronautics
Josh Mercaldo, Drake Cooper
Doug Neighbor, NPS
Diane Norton, IDC-Division of Tourism
Dean Sangrey, DIPR
Garry Young, ITD

Steering Group Membership

We welcomed to the Steering Group Gary McElheney, the new representative for the Idaho Transportation Department, Division of Aeronautics. Gary replaces Mark Young, who retired. We also welcomed Josh Mercaldo from Drake Cooper, who has taken Jeremy Chase's position.

Recreation-tourism databases, websites, and information fulfillment

Karen Ballard reported that in scrutinizing the Division of Tourism budgets, it became apparent that a great deal more funding than was reflected in past IRTI budgets is going now toward recreation-tourism databases, websites, and information fulfillment. Karen believes this dramatic increase, from \$110,000 to \$384,000, was actually accrued gradually, but hasn't been calculated and reflected in recent years. This change will be reflected in the FY09 IRTI Annual Operating Plan and Budget.

Idaho Campground Directory

Anne Chambers encouraged all agencies to look over their Campground Directory data, and update it as appropriate. Updates must be made by September 1st on the forms that she sent agency representatives or on-line at www.update.idaho.com. She said that within two weeks, she will send an information request to all agency representatives regarding the next bulk shipping. She will request numbers of Directories needed and addresses to which they should be sent. Anne urged folks to consider current inventories in requesting new Directories. She also mentioned that there is an opportunity to advertise in the upcoming Directory, and rates are reasonable. There were comments that the "Use Your Power Wisely" campaign and "511" (Idaho road conditions) should be included in the next directory.

Anne reported that visitation in Idaho's RV campgrounds seems to be good this summer. She observed that folks appear to be staying longer than usual, but bringing fewer "toys".

Free Fishing Day

Mike Keckler reported that thousands of people across the State participated in Free Fishing Day on June 7. Many were first-time anglers. Free-Fishing *Weekend* is still being discussed as a possibility for 2009.

Watchable Wildlife

Sara Focht has a new job as an educator at the M-K Nature Center, but she anticipates that IDFG will hire a new Watchable Wildlife coordinator. Sara requested that IRTI assist the new coordinator once he/she is hired.

Sara reported that there currently are no new Watchable Wildlife projects underway. She anticipates that the Watchable Wildlife working group will be involved with the Snake River Birds of Prey Festival, scheduled for next spring in Kuna to help promote the Western Heritage Scenic Byway.

OHV Travel Management

Dean Sangrey reported that HB602, which addressed OHV registration, was passed by the State Legislature last spring. The bill had inadequacies of which the sponsoring legislators are aware. Dean predicted that it will take the next couple of years to complete the necessary “clean-up”. Dean noted that OHV manufacturers are encouraging a “larger” definition of OHVs to include UTVs. Doug Neighbor mentioned that the Department of Justice is accepting comments through August 18 to help determine the legal definition of a wheel chair. This could affect the overall definition of trail vehicles.

OHV Outreach Efforts

Josh Mercaldo reported that there is a meeting this afternoon to discuss the fall campaign.

Scenic Byway Brochure

Garry Young reported that the *Taking the Scenic Route: a Guide to Idaho's Scenic Byways* brochure has gone through several printings with the same cover photo. Consequently, he is looking for a new, stunning cover photo for the next printing. It must be taken in Idaho, but it need not be taken on a Byway. Garry reported that brochure distribution has been low this year because the biggest distributor, the visitor center at milepost marker 1, has been under construction.

Garry reported that he has received no word regarding funding of 2008 Scenic Byway grants. Garry anticipates that if decisions are not made soon, it will be difficult to launch projects and expend funds this fiscal year.

Garry noted that it is often difficult for communities to find the 20% non-federal funds match required when requesting Scenic Byway grants. Karen Ballard offered that 10% of that (half of the 20%) could come from the Idaho Travel Council through Karen. Garry will call Karen to discuss this opportunity.

Outfitter and Guide GIS project

Bart Butterfield reported that most of the recent work on the outfitter and guide website project has not been very visible. However, recent work has been done to make the site more efficient, to enable more enhancements, and to create an interface for the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board (IOGLB) so that they can update their own data, etc. IOGLB now manages all of their own data. The site won't have to be housed at IDFG much longer.

There is more digitizing to be done. Ten hunting areas on private lands and 63 non-hunting areas on public lands need to be mapped. All mapped areas eventually will be incorporated into IDFG's “hunt planner/fish planner” website. The goal is to finish all mapping this year.

Statewide Online Trail and Recreation Mapping Project

Dean Sangrey reported that the State Legislature approved last spring the \$500,000 for this project. Steve Frost met with folks from the Department of Administration recently regarding the data necessary for the trail mapping project. There appears to be a solid, collaborative relationship developing with the Department of Administration.

Idaho Children and Nature Network (ID C&NN)

Mike Keckler reported that representatives from the Idaho Children and Nature Network met with the Governor and Mrs. Otter on July 7. The ID C&NN representatives were from the BLM, FS, USFWS, IDPR, IDFG, IDC, IRTI, Healthwise, and Idaho Commission on the Arts. Meggan Laxalt-Mackey, Vicky Runnoe, and Mike made the presentation to the Governor and Mrs. Otter in which they described ID C&NN's objectives to raise awareness about children and nature, to provide a mechanism for involving children in the outdoors, and to work with public and private partners. The Governor and Mrs. Otter were very receptive and willing to help further the mission of the ID C&NN. The Governor indicated that he would consider highlighting the important children and nature relationship in his 2009 State of State Address. Mrs. Otter asked that ID C&NN consider developing an instructional publication with a nature theme targeted for 4th graders who are working on “state reports”.

State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP)

Rick Just reported that Idaho's SCORTP was completed in 2006, and was approved finally in 2008. Since SCORTP updates are required every five years, Rick anticipates convening an interagency group to work on the 2011-2015 SCORTP prior to the end of this year. He intends to establish a task force that will include higher level agency officials and elected officials. Rick noted that Washington State has used this strategy successfully.

2009 Idaho Governor's Conference on Recreation and Tourism

Karen Ballard reported that planning for the 2009 conference has begun already. The conference is scheduled for May 5-8 in Sun Valley. There are plans to incorporate four tracks throughout the conference including these: sales and marketing, management, recreation, and "greening". Karen will be convening a planning committee soon, including staff from Sawtooth National Forest. Ideas for specific topics and speakers are welcomed. There is \$16,000 seed money available for the conference. The conference title will be changed if the Governor cannot participate in this year's conference. Karen noted that it would be helpful and practical for other related meetings to be scheduled in Sun Valley during this same week.

New Business

Idaho Ski Areas Association

Jennifer Johnson, who works with the Bogus Basin Recreational Association, represented the Idaho Ski Areas Association (ISAA), and discussed some of their programs. Jennifer described how Idaho's ski license plate fund works, stating that the ISAA serves as the "pass through agency" for the funding. One of the programs that it helps fund is Idaho's 5th Grade Ski or Ride Free Passport program.

- The program was started during winter 2005-2006.
- All Idaho ski areas participate, except Pomerelle. ISAA collaborates with ski areas in Washington and Montana. Marketing for the entire program is handled by a Spokane company.
- 5th graders apply for a passport (\$10), and then can ski three times for free at each of the participating ski areas. 2,000 students received passports last year.
- Lori Otter is the official spokesperson for this program that recruits new skiers. She has encouraged the ISAA to develop a follow-up program/certificate.

Jennifer also described a number of information resources and winter-related activities for students and teachers, including the following.

- The National Ski Area Association hosts a website, www.winterfeelsgood.com that provides information for teachers, focusing on outdoor winter activities.
- There is a Snow School offered at Bogus Basin's Nordic Center by the Winter Wildlands Alliance. It is a growing program for elementary school children focused on winter ecology, and gets kids out on snowshoes. The Snow School also offers training for high school students who wish to become "volunteer guides".

Doug Neighbor spoke of Craters of the Moon's winter ecology/snowshoe program, also for students, which is in its third year of operation. There is "skyrocketing" interest in the program, with 3,500 participants last year. Doug cited the fact that snowshoeing is an easy way for folks to experience the winter environment.

Voluntourism

Karen Ballard reported that the Division of Tourism is developing a website to encourage voluntourism. It is scheduled to be rolled out next spring, and will be available via the visitidaho.org web portal.

Public Lands Recreation Fees Study

Andy Brunelle provided the Steering Group with background on the federal recreation fee program (Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act). He observed that the program seems to be working, but that there is chronic discontent about it. In particular, he noted the July 13th Idaho Statesman op-ed piece by State Representative George Eskridge, that suggests that the fee program has a negative impact on state tourism. Andy asked the Steering Group how to determine if Representative Eskridge's assumption is correct or not. Karen Ballard

suggested that questions concerning recreation fees possibly could be included in a quarterly survey that the Division of Tourism is contracting. Steering Group members strongly urged that the wording of any such questions is important, and should be brought to the Group prior to conducting the survey. Karen agreed to explore the possibility of including such questions in the survey, and will let the Steering Group know what she learns. Rick Just suggested that the next SCORTP effort could include recreation fee questions, as well.

Academic Member of IRTI Steering Group

Sara Focht suggested that the IRTI Steering Group needs a representative from academia. Such a representative could provide assistance in a number of ways, especially in discussions such as the recreation fee discussion and in planning the next Governor's Conference on Recreation and Tourism. The Steering Group agreed, and Vicki Lawson agreed to try to solicit such a representative.

Agency Updates/Other Business

Idaho State Parks Centennial

Rick Just reported that Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) celebrated its centennial this year, with events at State Parks across Idaho on July 12. To recognize the centennial, IDPR produced student and teacher materials for 3,000-4,000 4th graders across the state. Also, as new Idaho residents surrender their out-of-state driver's licenses, they are given an IDPR directory and a free, one-day State Park pass. Also, in commemoration of its 100th year, IDPR produced a lovely book of its history. Books are available through Rick Just.

Greater Yellowstone Geotourism Project

Doug Neighbor reported that he is encouraging folks associated with the Greater Yellowstone National Geotourism project to include more of Idaho within the project boundaries, especially Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. Karen is on the committee which helps determine that, and she agreed to help. Karen will send out the list of sites being considered for inclusion in the Greater Yellowstone map guide.

IRTI News Release

Vicki Lawson reported that the FY2009 IRTI Operating Plan and Budget increased almost three times over the FY2008 Operating Plan Budget, from \$357,450 to \$1,140,550. The Steering Group agreed that a news release about this would be useful if it focuses on the increase as the effort of agencies to pool their diminishing resources in order to improve recreation and tourism in Idaho. Vicki agreed to work with Jennifer Wernex and Diane Norton to develop the release.

IRTI Web Page

IDPR and Division of Tourism offered to host an IRTI page on their websites. Vicki agreed to provide them with documents, including IRTI's history, mission, meeting minutes, and annual accomplishment reports.

Upcoming Events

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- **September 2-5** National Association of State Park Directors annual meeting, Boise, ID.
- **December 2-4** Western States Tourism Policy Council annual meeting, Santa Ana Pueblo, NM.
Information is available at www.NewMexico.org/WSTPC.

Tutorial

Thanks to Karen Ballard for providing a tutorial on how to use the UpdateIdaho website to update data used by the visitidaho.org site.

Date for Next IRTI Steering Group Meeting

Tuesday, December 9, 9 am – 1 pm

Idaho Department Parks and Recreation, 5657 Warm Springs Avenue, Boise

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

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

+Terry Heslin 208-373-3836 terry_heslin@blm.gov
*Robin Fehlau 208-373-3825 robin_fehlau@blm.gov

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

*Krystal Clair 208-383-2211 kclair@pn.usbr.gov
*Scott Short 208-383-2218 sshort@pn.usbr.gov

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

*Karen Ballard 208-334-2470 karen.ballard@tourism.idaho.gov
Diane Norton 208-334-2470 diane.norton@tourism.idaho.gov

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

+Bart Butterfield 208-287-2722 bbutterfield@idfg.idaho.gov
*Mike Keckler 208-287-2870 mkeckler@idfg.idaho.gov
+Vicky Runnoe 208-287-2874 vrunnoe@idfg.idaho.gov
+Sara Focht 208-287-2750 sfocht@idfg.idaho.gov

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF LANDS

*Craig Thompson 208-334-0260 cthompson@idl.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 GUIDES ASSOCIATION

*Grant Simonds 208-342-1438 gsimonds@cablone.net

IDAHO OUTFITTERS AND GUIDES 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
*Gary McElheney (Division of Aeronautics) 208-334-8893 gary.mcelheney@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-Mackey 208-378-5243 meggan_laxalt@fws.gov

U.S. FOREST SERVICE

*Jim Keller 208-373-4142 jbkeller@fs.fed.us
*Cecilia Seesholtz 208-373-4102 cseesholtz@fs.fed.us

IDAHO RECREATION AND TOURISM INITIATIVE

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