



IRTI Steering Group December 9, 2008 Meeting Minutes

Participants

Jeff Alexander, FS
Deniz Aygen, IDFG
Karen Ballard, IDC-Division of Tourism
Bart Butterfield, IDFG
Krystal Clair, BOR
Sara Focht, IDFG
Steve Frost, IDPR
Rick Just, IDPR
Mike Keckler, IDFG
Vicki Lawson, IRTI

Meggan Laxalt-Mackey, USFWS
Gary McElheney, ITD-Division of Aeronautics
Diane Norton, IDC-Division of Tourism
Vicky Runnoe, IDFG
Cecilia Seesholtz
Garry Young, ITD
Jennifer Wernex, IDPR

Steering Group Membership

We welcomed to the Steering Group Cecelia Seesholtz, new Boise National Forest Supervisor, and Jeff Alexander, new Boise National Forest Recreation, Lands, and Minerals Staff Officer. We also welcomed Deniz Aygen from IDFG, who will be the new Watchable Wildlife Committee chair. We bid a fond farewell to Sara Focht, who will still be working with IDFG, but at the MK Nature Center. We also bid farewell to Terry Heslin, who will be rotating off as chair of the Idaho Interagency Off-Highway Vehicle Coordinating Committee (IICC). Troy Elmore will be replacing Terry in January.

IRTI Follow-up Business

The signed FY2009 IRTI budgets and 2008 IRTI Annual Accomplishment Reports were distributed. By the end of the week, the Accomplishment Reports will be sent out electronically, and posted on the new IRTI web page, located at <http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/aboutus/irti.aspx> and also at <http://commerce.idaho.gov/travel/irti.aspx>. Vicki encouraged suggestions for improving the Accomplishment Report and web page.

The draft news release, "State and Federal Agencies Leverage Resources in Lean Budget Times" was discussed. Rick Just suggested that more emphasis be put on the fact that IRTI funds are existing funds, not new, additional funds. Vicki Lawson agreed to rewrite the release and share it with the Steering Group before finally releasing it.

Vicki reported that she has contacted Steve Hollenhorst at the University of Idaho about providing a faculty member to be on the IRTI Steering Group. He has agreed to recommend someone.

Vicki followed up on the August Steering Group meeting discussion about conducting a recreation fee survey. Karen Ballard had suggested that questions concerning recreation fees possibly could be included in a quarterly survey that the Division of Tourism was contracting. As it turned out, the costs of including these questions in the off-the-shelf survey are prohibitive. Rick Just reinforced that the next SCORTP effort can help explore recreation fee questions.

Outfitter and Guide GIS project

Bart Butterfield reported that almost all of the licensed outfitting and guiding areas in the State have been digitized. There are about 1,000 areas, and for about 900 of them, accurate information was easy to obtain. The last 100 have been difficult. Still remaining to be digitized are 2 fishing areas, 3 snowmobiling areas, and various private land areas. When outfitter and guides find mapping errors on the website, their concerns are reviewed by the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board, and then remedied.

Bart noted that now that the digitizing is nearly done and the search functionality is good, the website needs more exposure. The site can be found at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/ioglb/>. Karen Ballard will help with getting additional exposure by linking it to www.visitidaho.com. The site also will be a link on the IDFG's Hunt Planner site. However, it won't be part of www.updateidaho.com, since data will be maintained through a different portal. Karen noted that some of the Tourism funds in the IRTI agreement go toward supporting this project, so she will reflect that more clearly in next year's IRTI budget. In FY2010, this project will need \$4,000-\$6,000 to provide ongoing data maintenance and updates.

State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP)

Rick Just reported that plans to develop Idaho's next SCORTP (2011-2015) are moving rapidly. IDPR intends to regionalize the planning process, reflecting the regional boundaries of IDPR's Board representation. Each Board member will work with a team, and through local public meetings, identify issues. SCORTP goals and objectives will be developed responsive to these issues. IRTI will have a role in SCORTP, though its exact nature is not yet clear.

IDPR will request NPS-administered funds to help with the SCORTP process. IDC will help with a statewide study to determine the economic value of various kinds of recreationists to Idaho (e.g. snowmobilers, anglers, hikers, etc.). Terry Heslin recommended that the study include an element to explore the value of Idaho's "quality of life"-- why people choose to live here, what people give up (economically) to live here, etc. Rick anticipates that such a study will be expensive. He will be looking for a doctoral candidate who would like to explore this for a thesis. It was suggested that developers of some of the "on-hold" resorts (e.g. Tamarack, Avimore, etc.) may be willing partners to help fund such a study.

Jim Keller reported that the Boise National Forest is conducting National Visitor Use Monitoring now. It's a visitor use/economic/satisfaction survey conducted every five years on each National Forest. Every third survey administered gathers economic data, which may be useful to SCORTP. Meggan Laxalt-Mackey reported that USFWS conducts similar studies on lands it manages.

OHV Travel Management

Terry Heslin reported that the Idaho Interagency Off-Highway Coordinating Committee (IICC) MOU will expire this calendar year, and will need to be renewed. Some of the issues that the IICC has been working on include the new license plate requirements for trail vehicles resulting from passage of HB602 and grizzly bear habitat-OHV conflicts in Northern Idaho. Steve Frost reported that an IDPR website (http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/recreation/proposed_ohv_legislation.aspx) includes a fact sheet and FAQs associated with the new licensing requirements resulting from passage of HB602. Steve suggested that the Idaho Recreation Council may carry legislation in 2009 to "clean up" HB602; IDPR will not be drafting such legislation this year.

Terry said that the BLM has released the Challis Field Office Travel Management Plan and it has been challenged. The BLM Owyhee Field Office is planning to release the Travel Management Plan for the Murphy Subregion in early 2009. Jim Keller reported that the FS Chief requires all National Forests to have travel plans with route designations in place by the end of 2009. At this time, implementation of this requirement, the OHV Rule, is the highest recreation priority on the Boise National Forest.

OHV Public Outreach Campaign

Jennifer Wernex reported that the OHV public outreach campaign, STAY ON TRAILS, is now starting its fifth year. It has been modified and tweaked a bit each year. Jen observed that the message may need to morph again. The campaign has a 70% comprehension rate, as revealed by a recent survey. Vicky Runnoe inquired if there is a way to measure the impact of comprehension on behavior.

Jen is writing an ORMV grant proposal for campaign funding for years 5 and 6. Safety is a key element in the proposal and the campaign. Cecilia Seesholtz will be hosting a number of travel planning public meetings in the near future, and will be interested to gauge public response to the campaign. It is to the credit of all involved with

designing and implementing the campaign that neighboring states, including Nevada and Utah, will be using the same campaign.

Statewide Online Trail and Recreation Mapping Project

Steve Frost reported that progress on this project has been slow.

Idaho Campground Directory

The 2009 edition of the Idaho Campground Directory was published in October (130,000 copies) and shipped to each agency's list of recipients. Copies of the new Directories were distributed at the meeting.

Anne Chambers (via email) reported that all partners have been invoiced by IRVCA, except the BLM and FS. Terry Heslin indicated that the BLM will let partners know when to send invoices. Jim Keller said that the FS needs to amend existing agreements before invoices can be processed. Jim will let partners know when invoices should be sent.

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.

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 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.

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".

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.

Date for Next IRTI Steering Group Meeting

Tuesday, May 5

Sun Valley Lodge, Sun Valley, ID

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IRTI WEBPAGES are located at: <http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/aboutus/irti.aspx>
<http://commerce.idaho.gov/travel/irti.aspx>