

**Mt. Emily Recreation Area (MERA)
Joint Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 2, 2023**

Agenda

- **Convene @ 6:03pm – Misener Conference Room at 1001 4th Street**

- **Public comment – (3 minutes per individual)**
 - **Kathy Webb** - Coming to committee as a group of concerned skiers. Made a diagram of where road 202 splits off into the 203 road and a distance of about 4 miles; 202 road to the summit to the top where the roads converge and continue all the way up to the towers. This is the proposal. Igo extension lane is the 409 road that is already closed in winter due to animal migration. 1 mile of summit rock wall & narrow area and snowmobiles have a hard time making it through the rock wall. It is unsafe to have both groups of people, both track vehicles and skiers, because the track vehicles are so wide. The entire 203 road merging to 201 is an open area. Just asking for 4 miles for safe cross country skiing. Plenty of room for all.
 - **Charlie Jones** - Came to La Grande out of the Navy in 1974. Mt Emily was the go to place and a wonderful place for cross country skiing; went through a phase of great and then started adding snowmobiles up there and about 10 years ago the tired vehicles would go up during snow season and mess it up. MERA then put signs up & plowed a berm at the end of the parking area so it closed it to tired and was really good for a couple years after that. Then more people got tracked vehicles. Magnificent area for cross country skiing. Quiet non-motorized in our area that gets tremendous public use. People want a quiet place to get away from the city. Lovely spot and hardly anyone got up there this last winter.
 - **Kevin March** – Not the first time this has been brought up to close this area. Was told it's the ORV funds that pay for the mountain, so why is the archery road shut off. Safety is a big issue. Snowmobiles come down way too fast. 409 road is closed by ODFW from fall to spring. Went to Sean numerous times; called Sheriff department and nothing was done. This winter same thing, tracks around gate and down road; talked to Josh, Josh was great, even though there is a sign on the gate that says closed they still go around it; Josh put up another fence; and they went around that. Closed in the winter would be a good thing to do.
 - **David Kommosi** – Feel that snowmobilers want to be grandfathered into the local roads which means use MERA down by Igo where the 208 starts. A lot of

people are coming up Owsley Canyon Rd and parking at the triangle which is not legal and not safe. Loose traction. Parking issues. And safety issue for residents.

- **Meg Cooke** – Biggest thing is unsafe conditions. Snowmobilers moved over to the 202 uphill side and it's not wide enough to share. Every inch used by snowmobiles becomes very icy. Our weather is not conducive to multiuse snow. Heard the County won't allow to close the road. Designated at sole discretion of County; majority of the Commissioners. Does say designated to conserve energy. This activity forces users to drive to Anthony and Meacham, forcing those to not go to energy efficient. 201 & 203 not necessary for access.
 - **Steve Antell** – The compaction of snow becomes ice. Solid ice up there 8-10 ft wide 1-2 snow pack, sink, in a week it is packed ice. Even novice skiers struggle in these conditions. No access because of grooves and patches of ice. People are unfortunately starting to avoid going there. Up & down not compatible; not safe; and only 4 miles is the major issue.
 - **Bart Barlow** asked if submitting written comments was worth it because he didn't see them in the minutes.
 - Forrest replied that they are in the minutes and the committee gets a copy of the letters that are submitted. It is worth submitting.
 - **Charlie** wanted to point out that there are 4 women represented for cross country/snow shoeing and non-motorized is 90% men. Motorized largely a male activity.
- **Approve minutes of last meeting February 7, 2023 with correction to Kathy Webb worked at hospital not works at hospital. John made a motion to approve. Scott second. All in favor.**

Topics

- **Closing Mt. Emily Road (202) to all motorized vehicles (December 15th to April 1st) – Josh Ford**
 - Josh and Doug did some research to make sure there were no prior commitments to this road. Doug passed out the County map that was produced by Salem that shows classification of roads, specifically Mt Emily Rd. Mt Emily Rd is a public road/public access. The suggested proposal process starts with planning for the vacation process; is reviewed by planning; and the Public Works Director would also need to agree to the conditions; and this would also be opened up to all public comment. The committee can make a recommendation to take to

planning. It was recommended that the cross country group think bigger. This proposal limits use to one from another. This proposal would require and need to make a designated trailhead, parking area, etc. MERA Master Plan promotes diverse recreation. ***The committee agreed this was a no action item.***

- **Red Apple Forest Improvement Project – Doug Wright**
 - Red Apple thinning is not done because of issues with the archaeological site. We still have 3-4 log decks and a slash pile to remove but a permit must be submitted to remove these in the dry season instead of winter. The tribe and SHPO would need to agree for this to be done at a different time. In addition, no mills are currently taking pulp. Revenue \$28,000 and expenses \$23,000. Due to the volume of cut to limit cutting to preserve really not enough for mastication. If we do end up doing the finish work in the winter it will be very difficult. Currently exploring options and following the rules.
- **Designating Skills Slalom as Downhill only and providing an alternative uphill route – Sean Learner**
 - Skills Slalom by Igo is fun for downhill and designed for multi use (bike, hiking, horses). Would like to build climbing path beside it and designate downhill only trail. Tyler expressed this would be fantastic for users in the spring and fall. Would be specific for climbing. Will need to flag the process; come up with a safety plan; and won't change it until completely built. JB thought this would be great with signage and provide a better trail. Seems this would create a trail for everyone. All agreed to bring the trail plan to Josh and get going on it.
- **MERA Trail Users Collaborative project proposal on Lower Hotshot, Cinch, Bridleway, and MERA loop – Bart Barlow**
 - Bart proposed a maintenance plan with hired contractors and to personally bring in equipment, and volunteers. Some repairs have already been done to the proposed area. Agree that it needs fixed but this may not be the right time because the logging is not complete. We are still under contract and the contract includes rehab of trails by the contractor when the logging project is finished. Josh and Bart will discuss and decide what can be done for minimal maintenance for now. ***No motion was needed.***
- **O&M Grant Update – Josh Ford**
 - Signed the O&M grant for FY2023/2024 & FY2024/2025. Grant includes a mastication head.

- **Adding a GRH sunscreen station to fox hill TH – Josh Ford**
 - Cost will be about \$200 to be installed and after that the maintenance and filling is provided at no cost. Mark asked if it would be used. Josh thought it would be good to offer it. **Scott made a motion to approve. Chris second. All approve.**
- **Master plan amendments – Josh Ford**
 - Appreciated all the feedback. JB thought it seemed like it was written to go back to the Committee instead of the Commissioners; steering committee vs advisory committee. The first plan was written with no parks coordinator. All agreed amendments looked good.
 - **Sections 1,2,3 & 6**
 - **Tyler made a motion to approve. Jon second. All approve.**
 - **MERA Sign Plan**
 - **Chris made a motion to approve. Katrina second. All approve.**
 - **MERA Maintenance Plan**
 - **Tyler made a motion to approve. Scott second. All approve.**

Future Business

- **Master Plan (Section 5.0 Recreational Management)**
- **Mapping updates – Get mapped and put thru GIS**
 - Possibly buy new trailhead signs
 - Chris shared 1&7 are showing wear

Next meeting – Tuesday, August 1, 2023

Meeting Schedule: First Tuesday of May, August, November

Adjourn at 8:05pm