

Minutes of Recreation Meeting, July 26, 2008

Location: Jackson Forest Learning Center, Highway 20, near Camp 20.

Time: July 26, 2008, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Attendees: Mike Adair, Mike Aplet, Joyce & Juriaan Blok, Neil Davis, Marianne Gerssing, Charlotte Healy, David Larkin, Ron Lear, Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom, Craig Pedersen, Lari Shea, Barbara Sicard, Vince Taylor, Don Taylor, Forest Tilley, Shirley Wiles

Report on Trail Inventory Project

Cynthia LeDoux Bloom presented a preliminary map of popular hiking, equestrian, and cycling routes in Jackson State Forest. Copies of the map were given out to the Willits and Lake County equestrians, and the Ukiah Valley Trails Group requesting they route their trails to the map.

A next step is to compile additional information about the trail routes. Suggestions for desired additional info include:

Trail Inventory Action Items:

- Directions from Highway 20 (James Ck., LR Schoolhouse, ETS), Rd. 408, Rd. 409, and Big River State Park for getting to the current and proposed staging areas and trailhead points;
- Obtain GPS data sheet and methods for collecting coordinates from existing CalFire and Forest Resources Assessment Program (FRAP) road layers. GPS points should be obtained near yellow gates or road interceptions. We should coordinate with Sebastian for the preferred CalFire methodology and projection [NAD 83, UTM, or?].
- Discuss and determine Trailhead suitability for parking of vehicles, and tow vehicles and horse trailers;
- Calculate estimated trail distances in miles and kilometers.
- Obtain elevation gain from the 10 m the Digital Elevation Model (DEM); a digital representation of ground surface topography or terrain.
- Develop criteria to assess Trail condition;
- Define trail type (single track, used road, abandoned road ...);
- Suitability for different users (equestrian, hikers, bikers);
- Weather usage suitability related to erosion and instream impacts;
- Test some route signage options;

There was also discussion of how to provide the information to potential users. Given the number of possible routes, there would be many pages of information. Should it be in paper form or electronic? An informal poll showed about an equal split preferring each alternative; so probably both are necessary.

It was proposed to collect and organize information for a small number of trails to work out procedures and possibilities. Using trails around Brandon Gulch as a test was suggested, as these trails are heavily used by hikers, bikers, and equestrians.

Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom will coordinate with others to continue the trail inventory.

Suggestion for Development of a riding/hiking route from Willits to Mendocino

Mike Aplet suggested making a through hiking and riding route between Willits and Mendocino. The Sherwood-Little Lake Trail exists now, but there are sections in very bad repair such as the "Fintown to Rd. 1000 section. Also, there is a section (in the Company Ranch) that has been closed to public access by the current owner). Craig Pederson felt that this was outside of the scope of the Jackson recreation group, because much of the route would be outside of Jackson Forest. After some discussion, Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom, Mike Aplet, and Mike Adair agreed to form a working group to explore what would be involved in moving this project forward.

Revisiting Priorities

At its previous meetings, the various recreation groups outlined their priorities. The meeting revisited the priorities.

- The first priority for a large number of people is the availability of the newly revised map of Jackson Forest that has circulated in limited numbers. People asked Craig Pedersen, JDSF staff representative, how they might facilitate publication and open sale of the map. Craig said that there was a willingness to get the map printed, but the lack of a state budget was holding this up. He felt that it would not be too long after approval of the budget before the map could be printed.

There was some question in his mind, though, about whether it might not be better to wait until more recreation trails could be put on the map. The sense of the meeting is that it would be good to make the new map available soon, without waiting for future work.

- The need for identifying existing trailheads and developing new ones was emphasized. To access the trails in the forest, there needs to be parking spaces for parking vehicles. This is especially of concern to equestrians, who must be able to park trailers and turn around. This continues on the list of priority items.
- Dave Larkin of Fort Bragg raised the desire for legal Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) access to some part of Jackson Forest. He emphasized that there were state funds to pay for developing and maintaining OHV sites. He made many of the same points about the desirability of a legal site for OHV on the coast that have been made in previous meetings of the committee. Everyone is well aware that there is now a lot of OHV use in the forest, but it is illegal and uncontrolled. Meeting participants were generally supportive of efforts to pursue OHV use in Jackson Forest. A working group is in the process of formation to explore models of and requirements for OHV use on public land. They are planning to hold a meeting soon.

Organizing the Recreation Users Group

The new management plan for Jackson State Forest calls for the organization of a Users Group. Forest staff will consult with the users on a variety of important aspects of the recreation programs in Jackson Forest. A key section states:

- f* Recreation user groups will review recreation policies and plans, and develop survey concepts specific to their interest area. Surveys will provide feedback to JDSF staff on facilities and trails, changes needed to policies and plans, and recreation impacts from planned timber harvest and demonstration projects. Users will provide input on changes needed to address recreation user conflicts, such as conflicts between hunters/shooters and hikers; bicyclists and equestrians; campers and equestrians, etc.

Vince Taylor initiated a discussion on how best to organize user groups to most effectively interact with JDSF staff on recreation issues and planning. He proposed a "steering committee" with membership from the different recreation interest groups. He then asked for ideas and suggestions on the selection of members for the steering committee and how the members would be related to the existing recreation organizations and groups.

In response to a question about the role of the Recreation Committee of the JAG, Vince explained that the Recreation Committee was acting as a facilitator to assist in the formation of a functioning overall User Group, but that the User Group would primarily interact with staff of Jackson Forest. The Recreation Committee would act as a liaison between the User Group and Cal Fire and the JAG, but when all appeared to be functioning well, it would in all probability become more of an observer than a participant. The JAG has 3 years to propose modifications to the management plan and help in getting the forest operating well. Recreation is definitely a priority of the JAG.

Joyce Blok suggested that the steering committee be organized in the following way:

- Each recreation interest group would form a small subcommittee of the steering committee. The subcommittee would have 2-4 members. One or two would be active recreation people in that interest area. One would be an expert in the technical aspects of having appropriately designed facilities for that recreation interest. One would be a member of the general community, who would represent the interests of non-recreation people (for example, with respect to noise from some activities, such as shooting).
- One or two members of the subcommittee would represent that recreation interest on the steering committee.
- The steering committee would be composed of the chair (and in some instances, a co-chair) of the various subcommittees, plus some technical members and community representatives.

Neil Davis, who heads the Ukiah Valley Trail Group, noted that there is a difference between an individual and the representative of an organization. "Were I to say something at the User Group steering committee, I would be representing 400 people."

Craig Pedersen emphasized the importance of having a steering group of individuals who were committed and would attend regularly so that there was continuity.

Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom emphasized the importance of adjacent landowners, who protect Jackson Forest when others are not around.

It is important that all recreation interests be represented.

Craig Pedersen cautioned that the forest has a small budget, and only small steps were going to be possible for a while. The forest has had minimal staffing for a number of years, and it is going to take a while for it to get back to normal operations.

Forest Tilley, past manager of Jackson Forest, said that in the past there was a recreation position on the staff and he imagined that it would happen again.

Vince Taylor said that he expected that a letter would go out soon inviting people to apply for the User Group Steering Committee and that people should begin to think of who might be good applicants.

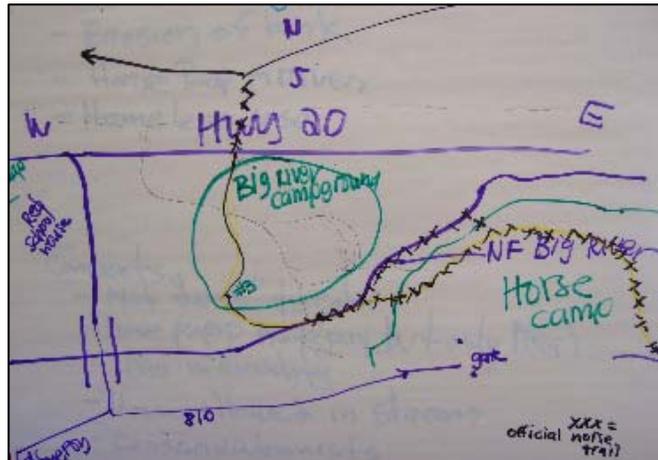
Problems at Horse Camp and Big River Campground

Vince Taylor introduced this item by explaining that Barb Sicard was going to present her observations about a number of problems in Big River Campground and the adjacent stream (North Fork of Big River) that were related to horse traffic through the BR Campground that comes from the Horse Camp located on the other side of the stream.

Vince said that the idea was to give everyone a chance to get information about the nature of the problems out in the open, but not to try to assign responsibility or blame at this point. The plan was to form a small working group with horse people, Barb Sicard, and Craig Pedersen. The working group would visit the site, discuss the problems, and hopefully come up with solutions that would make everyone feel good about it. He said that working on this problem could provide a model for how to resolve conflicts between different recreation users.

A person from Lake County said that she had expected a person to come to the meeting because she knew he was extremely upset about dogs off leash at the campgrounds. She felt the same way.

Barb Sicard made her presentation, passing around a number of photographs that showed erosion on trails, especially those crossing the stream, a big undercut on a river bank, unsanitary situations, trash bags hanging in trees, and dams built in the river. She said she was especially concerned about effects on salmon. There is no host at either Big River or Horse Campgrounds. She would like if horses did not go through Big River Campground.



Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom responded about the dams. She said she has a Masters in fishery planning. The “dams” built by people in the stream are not dams. A big steelhead can jump 12'!, and the little steelhead like to hide in the spaces created by the rock dams.

Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom answered a question by saying that horse poop is not good in the streams. There is a sufficient flow in the stream so that a small amount of poop in the stream is not a problem. A large amount would be a problem. We should look at the

information collected by the camp host from Dunlap Campground, who also visits Big River Campground, to see if there is a problem.

Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom also responded to a question on whether horses are allowed in the streams by saying, "Yes, absolutely they are allowed in the stream."

Neil Davis said that the Ukiah Valley Trail Group said that they see a lot of damage up on Cow Mountain and share the same concerns. "We are all conservationists."

Marianne Gerssing explained how the horse trails go through Big River Campground and why this was done. Horses go through Big River Campground because the horse trail goes through the campground. It was routed that way because it leads to a safe crossing of Hwy 20.

Barb Sicard noted that in the 1980's it was mostly families camping but now it is mostly homeless camping. The toilet is so bad that no one wants to use it.

Don Taylor mentioned all of the damage done to trails, even by deer. He believes that user groups would be more than happy to do work to maintain trails and prevent environmental damage if they are requested.

There was agreement to form a working group to address the issues raised. Members of the Big River Camp working group are Barb Sicard, Kay Lieberknecht (equestrian), Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom (fish, equestrian), and Craig Pedersen (JDSF), who will coordinate the group.

Craig Pedersen commented that the Dunlap host visits the other campgrounds daily, and they now have two patrol personnel on the forest; so hopefully it will get better. A big part of the issue is the "clientele".

Appended to the Minutes are comments on camping problems submitted to the Recreation Committee

Trail Care Workshop November 15 and 16, 2008

Rick Riley announced that on November 15 and 16 the bicycle group will be having workshops on trail building given by IMBA Trail Care Crew. There will be an open house social night, a workshop, and then a trail work party. Neil Davis said he was familiar with their work, "They are awesome." More details will be forthcoming.

Adjournment

Adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Kay Lieberknecht

From: "Kay Lieberknecht" <hoofinit@pacific.net>
To: "Pam Respini" <vacationista@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, September 08, 2008 11:18 AM
Subject: Re: Contacts

P. O. Box 914
Ukiah, CA 95482
September 8, 2008

Dear Folks who Care about Jackson Forest,

I hope that all of us who love the land and the creek near the Horse Camp accessed past the Little Red School House will work together to keep it safe and comfortable for those camping and using the trails with and without horses, while ensuring that Nature's needs are met.

Hearing that only 15 salmon showed up for this year's count on the Coast, compared to 15,000 last year, I want to prevent silting up the waterways or slowing their flows. So at the NATRC ride in August I provided a sign for the ranger to post advising horses not be taken down steep slopes to the water, and a group of teens and I took apart the two dams that were significantly slowing the flow between the Horse Camp and Highway 20. I suggest switchback trails be created from Horse Camp to the water.

The trail to the water from the Highway 20 side, where people camp without horses, is quite steep, with roots exposed where the dirt has been eroded away. I imagine that dirt went into the water I think gravel should be applied to that trail, held from falling into the water by little "retaining walls". Although it is pretty and exciting to cross the river on horseback there, I think it is not in line with Nature's needs, and also the campers at the top may be scared of horses, and we may be scared of their dogs. I urge that horses be required to go through Dunlap Camp or past the Little Red School House to go across Highway 20. If signs saying "no horses" at the top and bottom of that trail weren't enough, a three foot high post sunk into concrete just a couple feet up the narrow trail would prevent horses climbing up, but it would need a matching post at the top of the trail for safety so some horse didn't have to back up the trail upon reaching the lower post.

Research I have read over the past few years has not shown that horses dropping manure in or near waterways creates a health hazard, but I realize some people are concerned about this. If running water (via faucets) were installed in Horse Camp, there would be less horse traffic in the water nearby, but I hope there will be no attempt to prohibit horses from entering the water.

9/8/2008

I appreciate the requirement that campers take away their horses' manure and scatter leftover hay. A resident host at Horse Camp would be a great addition, to help everyone feel safe and comfortable and able to stay in line with Nature's needs.

I would like to be contacted by anyone working to improve the Horse Camp - switchback trail, restoring the eroded trail from the river toward Highway 20, or putting in a water system. I can provide several energetic volunteers who have common sense and an ability to be part of a team. Call me - (707) 621-3662.


Kay Lieberknecht

9/8/2008

September 17, 2008

To: Whom it may concern

From: Nayo Sicard

I am writing this letter in hopes of alerting you to some troubling situations we have found while camping in Mendocino County campgrounds specifically in the Jackson State Demonstration Forest. To give you some background, my husband, children and I are avid campers who have camped throughout California. We have visited many campgrounds and overall been very satisfied with our surroundings and the cleanliness of the campgrounds we visit. For the first time this year we decided to explore campgrounds close to home and settled on some campgrounds located within the Jackson State Demonstration Forest.

During our visits to these campgrounds we encountered several very friendly campground hosts, many friendly people and some truly beautiful natural areas. However, we also discovered that these campgrounds were littered with many dangerous and disgusting things. The amount and type of garbage that we encountered made it hazardous to camp with our children. We were first required to do quite a bit of clean-up to make it safe.

In one of our campsites we discovered broken and burned bottles within the fire ring. We also observed garbage- including fishing line, dog/human feces, numerous bottle caps, tin cans, nails and wire strewn on the ground in many of the open campsites. It was clear that the host was not doing a thorough walk through and clean-up after the previous campers had departed. In another campground we discovered used condoms, condom wrappers, alcoholic beverage containers, and random garbage both spilling from the trash receptacles and throughout many of the campsites.

We were very disappointed to see the campgrounds disrespected in this manner. Even in the campgrounds with a host the amount of

garbage was disheartening. I wanted to bring this to your attention in hopes that you could possibly provide better oversight to these camping areas. Perhaps all the campgrounds within your purview need to have campground hosts, posted usage rules and consequences for breaking them. While my family loves camping we will not be visiting campgrounds within the Jackson Demonstration Forest anytime soon for anything longer than a day trip.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nayo Sicard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Nayo Sicard

Subject: Re: Jackson Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes
From: awhitedog@aol.com
Date: Tue, 30 Sep 2008 15:13:20 -0400
To: vtaylor@mcn.org

Thanks so much for forwarding this. I noticed the comment about the campgrounds being used more for transients than families now and I can say for sure that was the case this weekend. One group living out of an old bus was even washing their large carpet in the river complete with wads of soap. Grrrrrr.

Any chance that Cal Fire can start charging use/camping fees?
Angie

-----Original Message-----

From: Vince Taylor <vtaylor@mcn.org>
To: Angie Meroshnekoff <awhitedog@aol.com>
Sent: Mon, 29 Sep 2008 9:45 pm
Subject: Jackson Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes

Dear Angie,

Attached are detailed minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on September 19, 2008. Appended are two comments submitted to the Recreation Committee about problems at Big River Campground. These problems were discussed at the meeting.

If you weren't at the meeting, they are worth a read. They show the amount of interest and participation in recreation in Jackson Forest.

I will be summarizing the minutes at the JAG meeting on this coming Saturday.

Best regards,

Vince

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Version: 8.0.173 / Virus Database: 270.7.5/1700 - Release Date: 9/30/2008 11:03 AM

AWHITEDOG@aol.com wrote:

I can't make the meeting but did talk with Craig Pederson yesterday. It would sure be nice if we could locate a safe trail for the horseback riders that didn't impact the Big Creek campground or the creek itself. Asking people to ride down to the Schoolhouse intersection isn't reasonable and that corner isn't safe to cross on horseback.

Angie 9/11/2008 4:12 PM