

Subscribe | Archives | Weather

Jobs | Cars | Farmers Market | Real Estate | Re

# Baker City Herald

▶ Submit news information online

▶ Photo Reprints delivered to your door

▶ Go | A&E every

Thursday • October 11, 2007 • 09:48 AM

ADVERTISEMENT



## Home

Homepage

## News

Local News  
Local Sports  
Obituaries  
Living Well  
Milestones  
Outdoors  
GO! Magazine  
Submit News  
Archives

## Multimedia

Baker High Football video  
Fall Sports Preview Slideshow  
Order Photo Reprints  
Haines Rodeo Slideshow  
Miners Jubilee Slideshow  
Bullriding Blowout Video

## Opinion

Letters to the Editor  
Submit letters to the Editor  
Editorials

## Classifieds

Classified Listings  
Search Ads  
Place an Ad

## Information

## Committee offers public one more chance to comment on forest travel plan

PUBLISHED: OCTOBER 9, 2007

By MIKE FERGUSON

### Baker City Herald

The public has one more chance to tell the county's Travel Management Plan Committee why certain roads among the 4,261 miles proposed for closure in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest should remain open.

The committee has scheduled a 7 p.m. meeting Monday at Baker City's Sunridge Inn, 1 Sunridge Lane. Aletha Bonebrake will moderate.

The committee has until Nov. 16, Forest Supervisor Steve Ellis' extended deadline, to stake out the county's position on the Forest Service's proposed action. The proposal has sparked an outcry from all-terrain vehicle riders, hunters and other groups upset with possible road closures that will reduce or eliminate access to their favorite public recreational destinations and routes.

"We need the public to tell us where their favorite rides are, and help us learn more about the public's desire for the kinds of forest-use activities that are important to them," committee chair Jan Kerns said in an e-mail. "We would like people to have written statements to accompany their verbal statements, so that we can include them in the response from the county."



**Local snowmobilers and ATV users are arguing for continued access to Wallowa-Whitman National Forest roads like these near Halfway.**

Baker City Herald/S. John Collins

Contact Us  
 About Us  
 Subscribe to the  
 Paper  
 Job Opportunities  
 How to Advertise  
 Oregon Newspaper  
 Network  
 Oregon.com

### Business Links

The Flower Box  
 Sexton Ranches  
 Natural Beef & Lamb  
 Baker City Floral  
 Mad Matilda's  
 Haines Steakhouse  
 Khmer Krafts  
 joeboard.com

### Important Links

Outdoor Links  
 Community Links  
 Baker County Links  
 Baker County Fair  
 Results

According to Kerns, those comments should include:

n The general areas where the person recreates.

n The time of year and activity. Examples include huckleberry picking and camping in the summer and hunting and woodgathering in the fall.

n The reasons why those roads are important, whether it's safety of the ride, new scenery, ease of access to camping or fishing sites, and the like.

Presentations are limited to five minutes; Kerns said 2-3 minutes is better to allow more people to speak and deliver their comments to the county committee.

The committee, which has been at work since late July, has devised a scoring system for the roads it's studying among five watersheds: around Sumpter, Pine Creek, Eagle Creek, Rock Creek/Face of the Elkhorns and Stices Gulch/Salisbury.

Those are the roads the committee believes it can inventory before the Nov. 16 comment deadline, Kerns said.

Approximately 25 volunteers have used a scoring sheet that combines public activity with resource concerns. The higher the score, the more the committee wants the road to remain open.

In the public activity portion, 50 points is the maximum score. Factors include road use, season of use, current access, which vehicles can access the road (an ATV is five points, a passenger car is 10 points) and frequency of road use.

Under resource concerns, 95 points are possible. The higher the number, the higher the impact on natural resources.

The qualities scored in this category include evidence of erosion; slope of the road; how close the road is to a stream; whether the road crosses a stream; vegetation between the road and stream; evidence of nearby activities, including woodcutting (7 points) logging or mining (9 points) and catastrophic fire (10 points); and the extent of big game cover.

The score sheet has four other categories: whether the road is in a wildlife overlay; whether a nearby stream is on a federally-protected list for erosion control; protected for threatened or endangered species, including bull trout; or has other special considerations, like being the only access road to an area or a loop road.

A perfect score is 185.

The committee wants to rank roads in a way compatible with the way a Forest Service team is going through a similar process, Kerns said. The committee's hope is that Ellis will include all or part of the county's recommendation when he delivers to the public his preferred option late next year.



Already, the committee has scored all the roads in the Pine Creek, Eagle Creek and Rock Creek/Face of the Elkhorns watersheds. It's about half done in the two other watersheds.

Early survey results show a surprisingly high percentage of roads proposed for closure by the Forest Service — about 30 percent of the roads studied — have "naturally grown closed," in committee parlance. To most of the committee members, those roads should be removed from the proposed closure list, since nature has in effect closed them already.

On Monday, the committee heard from county roadmaster Ken Helgerson, who explained how the county deals with legal claims over historic RS2477 roads, roads that predate the creation of the Forest Service.

There are currently three roads — the Mill Creek Road on the south side of Dooley Mountain, the Auburn Gulch Road near the Burnt River county road, and Road 1115, the Altered Dooley Toll Road — that the road department is investigating as potential RS2477 roads. All are at the request of Dale Hoopes of the Pioneer Mining Co.

RS2477 roads have historic, cultural or commercial significance, and the county has a legal process for trying to keep them open, if Helgerson and county commissioners find the road significant. The county went to court over its decision to declare the Connor Creek Road an RS2477 road, and it eventually won the case.

But Helgerson said he prefers to maintain the county's 1,800 miles of roads rather than spend money fighting court battles.

"That's a better use of taxpayers' money," he told the committee.

Miner Ken Anderson is preparing a list of about 200 roads that could be considered RS2477 roads, Helgerson said, a move that might encourage the Forest Service to look elsewhere for roads to close.

Further clouding the issue is a book titled "Commissioner Journal H" that's been missing from the Baker County Courthouse for more than 30 years. That book "is filled with road illustrations" and "contains the bulk of the data" about county roads before 1970, Helgerson said.

A previous roadmaster indexed the roads mentioned in that journal, but without the book itself, the index cards are not helpful.

| [Home](#) | [Local News](#) | [Local Sports](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Living Well](#) | [Milestones](#) | [Submit News](#) | [Archives](#) |  
| [Classifieds](#) | [Photo Reprints](#) | [Letters](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Us](#) |

#### [County Court Records](#)

Unlimited County Court Record Searches, Plus All Public Records.  
[www.Web-Detective.com/county\\_cc](http://www.Web-Detective.com/county_cc)

#### [Access Property Records](#)

Look-up Property Records by County, City or State. Instant Access.  
[www.FreeRecordsRegistry.com](http://www.FreeRecordsRegistry.com)

#### [National Forest](#)

Great deals on everything Forest themed.  
[shopping.yahoo.com](http://shopping.yahoo.com)

#### [Baker County Records](#)

Investigate Anyone: Now Baker County Records Search.  
[Public-Records.Search.com](http://Public-Records.Search.com)

© Copyright 2001-2007 Western Communications, Inc. - By using this site you agree to our Terms of Use