

BCHA Public Lands Committee call

February 20, 2018

On the Call:

Jacque Alexander, AR; Randy Brown, GA; Bob Magee, CA; Nancy Sluys, VA; Roy Cornett, KY; Barry Reiswig, WY (and PLC co-chair); Sherry Copeland, MO (and BCHA Treasurer) Diane Cherry, VA; Alan Hill, CA (and BCHA Executive Committee member); Chuck Miller, MT; Darrell Wallace, WA (and BCHA Vice Chair); Freddy Dunn, UT (and BCHA Chair); moderated by Randy Rasmussen, BCHA Director, Public Lands & Recreation

Purpose of the Call: Begin to hone in on key campaign elements and actions needed for success.

Alan Hill: Add to agenda 15 US Forest Service priority areas for increased trail maintenance.

1. Update on HR 1349, (bikes in Wilderness bill)

- HR 1349 has yet to be scheduled for “Floor vote” in the House of Representatives. It might not be, as there are other bills coming from the Natural Resources Committee that are “feel-good” and not nearly as controversial as HR 1349. So hopefully, HR 1349 represents a “poison pill” and might not be inserted in with other less controversial bills.
- There are other events that reduce the likelihood of HR 1349 going to a Floor vote: Montana Rep. Gianforte was convinced to rescind his support (after he voted to approve in NR Committee) by Mack Long and Montana professional outfitters. This, and opposition to the bill by IMBA, have put a chill on its advancement.
- **BCHA will circulate another action alert urging all members to phone their representative to oppose HR 1349 if we get wind of any possible movement.**

Randy: **Op-eds in newspapers in critical congressional districts still needed; please contact me. Don't hesitate to call your representative on HR 1349.**

Alan: Rep LaMalfa (CA) told locals Feb. 17th that he “doubted HR 1349 would go far.”

2. Update on USFS blasting policy

- No decision yet by Chief whether to out-source the blasting program. The issue was brought up last week in a Hike the Hill meeting with the Chief last week (by Randy). He responded that he's been hearing a lot, both internally and from partners, about the need to retain professional FS blasters. He has assigned an internal working group to come up with a recommendation.

3. Update on NBM Public Lands Workshop (April 24th)

Barry proposed PL Workshop include about 2 hours where attendees: a) split into regional groups, b) asked to define what is your greatest (1 or 2) trail or public land issue, and c) asked

to define how to address the issue. Groups would reconvene for discussion with all attendees to look for commonalities and troubleshoot solutions.

Barry: Need volunteers to 1) brief all committee chairs in BCH, what their role is and how they should play it; and 2) help with legwork on meeting logistics. Jacque volunteered for #1.

#2 needs someone who has yet to be deeply involved in PLC (Roy Cornett?)

Freddy: Will sent email in mid-March to NDs explaining how this meeting will be different, will spend more time talking among each other than being talked to by outside guests.

Barry: Need also discussion of how to be effective working with MOCs and staff.

4. Update on NWSA Forest Trails Stewardship Grants

- A direct result of our work to pass the 2016 National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act. USFS made \$250,000 available in grants last year (2017)
- \$400,000 available for 2018 work projects. Matching grants, either cash or in-kind. Any non-profit recognized by the IRS qualifies. Grants intended to address documented trail maintenance backlog.
- See www.wildernessalliance.org for details.
- Randy is on NWSA grant selection committee. Feel free to contact him for details. He recommends that grant applications:
 1. Cover multiple chapters,
 2. Cover many miles of trail, and
 3. Tap as many volunteers and partners as possible.

In this case, the bigger the impact in these three areas, the higher your potential score for the application.

- **Timeline for Program:**

March 1 – April 15: Solicit Applications

April 15 – May 1: Review Projects, Make Final Selections

May 1 – May 15: Announce Selections, Distribute Project Agreements

5. Outlining Campaign Plans on Fed. Land Transfer and HR 1349

News: the President's new infrastructure plan released last week calls for the privatization of two national park units: George Washington National Parkway and the Baltimore-Washington National Parkway. These are not typical national parks, but the concern is that having this precedent could compel Congress to consider adding more park units for privatization in lean budget times.

The ballooning federal deficit is another factor that could compel Congress to push for the wholesale sell-off of vast tracts of federal land. Randy learned last Thursday that Chairman Rob

Bishop believes that federal lands that lack a specific designation for use should not be retained by the federal government.

Campaign Plan Objectives

Internal Communications

BCHA membership among its 31 states and 190+ chapters that is informed, engaged and responsive to calls to take action.

External Communications

Increased visibility for BCHA as evidenced by letters to the editor in regional and national news media regarding the topic of federal land transfer and protection of the Wilderness Act.

Partnerships

Strengthened partnerships with like-minded organizations opposed to federal land transfer and amendments to the Wilderness Act, as demonstrated by coalition sign-on letters, joint letters to elected officials, and use of earned media to convey shared viewpoints.

Advocacy

Key elected officials who appreciate BCHA's ethic of service and desire to maintain the nation's natural heritage and wilderness areas.

Randy will circulate an email to PL Committee members for their ideas on these objectives.

Other topics:

Barry: WY BCH just got grant for radio ads and a full page ad in Casper Sunday paper on threat to Wilderness Study Areas in Wyoming.

Roy: When next in DC, meeting with agency leaders is important.

Alan: Update on Wildfire Disaster Funding Act? Randy: Lots of discussion during Hike the Hill about it. Members on both sides of the aisle are trying to advance it, looking for any "vehicle" to attach it to like Appropriations. There is broader recognition among House leadership that a fix is needed for "fire borrowing," which undermines the USFS during heavy wildfire seasons (which are happening with greater frequency).

Roy: Visited the West recent. In ID, WA, MT forest fires were huge in scale.

Next Meeting

Randy will circulate a doodle poll for scheduling the next PL Committee call. Objective of the call will be to flesh-out action plan on HR 1349 and Public Lands Transfer campaigns.

Phone Conference lasted 58 minutes.

RR