

## I. INTRODUCTION

This document is an analysis of the "public need" for commercial outfitting and guiding (O&G) on the Hood River Ranger District, Mt. Hood National Forest. The District has recieved several detailed formal applications for O&G permits in the last 2 years. This document will focus on the need for O&G services outside of wilderness areas. A seperate analysis will be conducted for individual wilderness areas.

This document is written in a manner to provide information for readers who are not familiar with Forest Service policy and direction concerning the analysis of "public need" as a component of issuing outfitting and guiding permits. The is NOT an Environmental Analysis (EA) of the effects of outfitting & guiding on the Hood River Ranger District.

## II. OUTFITTING & GUIDING ON NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS

The Forest Service issues outfitter and guide permits in order to respond to a management (public) need to provide high quality public services and assistance to the recreating public user on National Forest System lands.

Permits are issued to:

1. Assure that a service we require is provided in order to meet our mission relative to providing public services, protecting public health and safety and helping to attain management goals and objectives.

Outfitter permittees exist because the Forest desires their assistance in accomplishing our management goals and objectives. They are not a user, they are an agent to provide services to the public. The relationship between the Forest Service and an outfitter is one of a "partnership".

Issuance of an O&G permit requires a 5 step process:

1. Determination of a demonstrated public need has been completed and documented by the Forest Service.
2. The issuance proposal has been fully evaluated and the appropriate NEPA analysis/documentation had been completed.
3. The analysis and decision has been documented and linked to the Forest plan.
4. The bid prospectus process has been followed for solicitation for applicants, evaluating competition and providing required documentation/information on applicants.
  - a. Applicant has proven financial capability and possesses adequate experience/expertise to operate a successful sustainable business.

b. The most highly qualified applicant(s) has been selected via a formal documented applicant selection/use allocation process.

5. The permit is issued consisting of:

- a. The basic permit
- b. Operating plan; this is for the tenure of the permit
- c. Annual itinerary (annual operating plan)

General direction on the issuance of O&G permits is contained in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2709.11 and Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2320.13g.

FSH 2709.11, 41.53a states that we should issue and administer permits for outfitter and guide activities to:

1. Meet general public recreation service needs identified through forest land and resource management planning.

FSM 2712.2 states that a permit may be issued when there is a demonstrated public need for the service.

### III MT. Hood NF Plan Direction

The 1990 Mt. Hood National Forest Plan provides direction concerning recreation and the issuance of outfitting and guide permits.

Mt. Hood National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan provides direction for management of National Forest Lands. The Plan recognizes that the Mt. Hood NF is considered an "urban forest" due to its proximity to a growing urban population of over 1 million people. The accessibility makes the Mt. Hood the near sole provider of many outdoor recreation opportunities and the major provider of many others. It affords an irreplaceable ability to provide recreational facilities to all elements of the population regardless of economic status, physical ability, ethnic background or age.

The Recreation Guiding Principles listed in the Forest Plan are to:

- \* Foster coordination among all partners who provide outdoor recreation activities and settings.
- \* Enable people to learn and grow in their outdoor experience.
- \* Integrate other resource objectives consistent with sound forest management.
- \* Be primary advocates and providers of outdoor recreation opportunities that are appropriate to a large natural forest setting.
- \* Be leaders in providing environmental education and outdoor recreation as part of urban outreach efforts.
- \* Seek bridging opportunities to tie local and State tourism strategies to the Forest mission.

When considering the previous discussion on outfitter-guides, it is clear that the outfitter-guides can play a key role in fulfilling these principles.

Standards and Guidelines listed in the Forest Plan for recreation special use permits are as follows:

- a. The recreation experience provided under the permit shall be compatible with the Management Area direction in which the special use occurs.
- b. The number of recreation special use permits issued shall not exceed the estimated capacity of the desired recreation opportunity.
- c. Permit stipulations and facilities shall be designed to minimize impacts on other Forest users and Forest resources.

#### IV Determination of Public Need

What is "public need"??

Public need is a need identified by the Forest Service which is deemed essential or required for the well-being of the public and in order to meet the intent of the Forest's mission to manage and protect wilderness resources, provide for public safety, and provide high quality public recreation services (Barker, 1993).

Barker (1993) states that a prospective outfitter's desire for a permit does not constitute a public need, nor does market generated demand (solicited calls/letters) by a potential applicant constitute a public need. The Forest must determine the need based on its mission, goals, and objectives and resource capability. Commercial use of public lands is permitted only to help achieve the mission of the Forest Service.

Evaluation Criteria used for determining the need for outfitter assistance in the management of the Hood River Ranger District were established following the criteria used by the BLM for the Dillon Resource Area in Montana (Dillon Resource Area Outfitter Management Guidelines - BLM, March 1993).

1. Skills and Equipment - outfitter skills and equipment are needed by a portion of the public because of one or more of the following:

- a. Specific skills required for activities appropriate for the area require substantial time and/or talent to learn.
- b. Learning necessary skills and participating in the activity requires acquisition and consistent use of expensive, specialized equipment for which the public could not, or normally would not, expend the dollars or time.

- c. The skills required are so unique that use of an outfitter is almost a prerequisite if the public is to have any opportunity to participate in and enjoy the activity.
2. Knowledge - outfitter knowledge of the recreational resource and the activity area is needed by the public, and especially nonresidents, in order to enjoy recreational opportunities in a manner that reduces resource damage and user conflicts. This includes knowing where and by what method to best access and travel through an area.
3. Safety - an outfitter's special skills and equipment are needed for a reasonable level of safety for the participants. Without outfitter assistance, members of the public could seriously endanger their health or lives.
4. Special Management Objectives and/or Issues - outfitter assistance is needed to insure special management objectives are met and/or issues resolved. Examples could include:
  - a. Provide recreational opportunities for the handicapped.
  - b. Protect fragile resources.
  - c. Provide environmental education and interpretive information
  - d. Assist in reducing critical resource impacts and/or conflicts between users
  - e. Provide for additional recreational opportunities that...
    - Increase the diversity of recreational activities and public enjoyment
    - Encourage innovation in the outfitter industry....as long as the activities are not in conflict with land use or area management objectives.
5. Extent to Which Existing Outfitter Permits are Being Utilized.
6. Level of Use and Conflict -

### The Concept of 'Need' for Outfitter Assistance

When there is a high demand by all sectors of the public for a limited supply of recreation resources or opportunities, it eventually becomes necessary to impose use assignment levels in order to provide for, and to sustain the quality of the resource and the level of recreation experiences desired by the public. It is under these circumstances that the need arises to apportion recreation use in a manner which is fair to the guided, as well as the nonguided sector.

The premise for apportioning recreation use in this document is based on the concept of "need" for outfitter assistance. This concept directly relates to and supports the "partnership" role of the outfitter to assist public agencies by removing barriers to recreation opportunities encountered by some members of the public. The level of opportunity barriers can vary from those which

obviously require outfitter assistance due to the high level of skills, expensive equipment, etc., involved, to activities for which the level of skills and equipment are not a serious barrier to participation by the nonguided sector. Outfitter clients can also vary from those who clearly need assistance to recreate, to those that could recreate on their own, but having sufficient time and money choose to use an outfitter.

As based on the discussions above, the justification for issuing additional outfitter permits will be proportional to the public's "need" for outfitter assistance. Where there is a high need for outfitter assistance, there will be relatively more justification for assigning outfitters a greater share of use opportunities. If the "need" for outfitter assistance is low, there will be relatively less justification to assign new or additional outfitter use opportunities, especially where total use is exceptionally heavy and use conflicts are intense.

The relative need for outfitter assistance ranges from low to high. The highest "need" defined for recreation activities occurs when there is a substantial need for outfitter assistance. This category involves activities in which significant portions of the public would not be able to participate in without outfitter assistance, due to the level of skill, type of equipment required, safety considerations, etc. Examples of activities in this category would include whitewater floating, extended horse pack trips into backcountry, and mountain climbing.

The next category, characterized as a moderate need for outfitter assistance, would involve activities where, in most instances, the type of equipment, level of skills, etc., required are important, but would not impose substantial barriers to public participation. However, the public provided with important benefits from outfitter assistance. Included in the list of benefits would be the opportunity to learn recreation skills, develop conservation ethics, and practice low impact techniques when recreating. One important benefit of outfitter service in this category involves the outfitter's responsibility to insure clients adhere to game laws and other rules. Activities in this category would include nonwhitewater floating/fishing, end of road guided hunting camps, fly fishing, etc.

The last category is defined as a low need for outfitter services. Perhaps the most extreme example of this category would involve an outfitter whose only role was to transport a hunter from his hotel room to and from a well-known, very accessible, and heavily used hunting area in a two-wheel drive pickup.

Many activities will not fit cleanly into one of the three categories, but may overlap the boundary between two categories. For example, some equipment could fit into the high need category due to the high cost of equipment involved, such as, the cost of a rubber raft or dory for nonwhitewater floating and fishing. While the activity involved, fishing, would otherwise be in the moderate need category.

Matrix Chart

### 1. Skills & Equipment:

The proposed activities all require a moderate degree of skill. Of these proposed activities, extended horse packing trips are probably the most expensive in terms of maintaining equipment necessary to conduct the activity. With a largely urban based population, most people today lack the resources to keep a trained horse. Also most of the public are not expected to have the time, skill and equipment needed for extended backcountry horse trips.

### 2. Knowledge:

Outfitter knowledge of the recreational resource and the activity area is needed by the public, and especially nonresidents, in order to enjoy recreational opportunities in a manner that reduces resource damage and user conflicts. This includes knowing where and by what method to best access and travel through an area.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is part of a national program to assist state and local governments with acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. In Oregon, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept has been responsible for the SCORP since the program's inception in 1965. The 1993 SCORP report surveyed 1,006 Oregon households by phone and recieved 501 completed questionnaires total.

The survey indicated no time, too far, too crowded, equipment too expensive, fees too high, don't know where, lack of skill, safety and facility maintenance as the barriers to participation in dispersed recreational activities.

Within the Forest, there is a demand for interpretive services and environmental education opportunities. County Parks and Recreation departments, colleges both request guiding permits for classes on the forest.

### 3. Safety:

All these proposed activities are considered low to moderate risk activities. Mountain biking would probably be considered the highest risk activity. With the increase in mountain biking activity, some concern has been expressed over potential risk to horse back riders (horses may be "spooked" by mtn bikers and throw a rider) or hikers. To date, there have been no reported injuries of this type on the Ranger District. Within the last 5 years, there has been one Search and Rescue for a lost mountain biker on the Hood River Ranger District outside of wilderness.

In 1993, there were 5 S&R's in the Columbia Wilderness, 2 in the Mt. Hood. In 1994, 2 S&R's in the Columbia Wilderness and 2 in the Mt. Hood Wilderness. There were also 2 fatalities in 1994. These were climbers on the Cooper Spur route of Mt. Hood. In 1995, there have been 2 S&R's to date in the Columbia Wilderness. Based on this information, safety would

be more of an issue in the wilderness areas rather than outside of wilderness.

4. Special Mgt. Objectives:

Mountain biking is the fastest growing recreational activity on the District. This has increased the need for trail maintenance and in some instances, required seasonal closure of some trails. With the reduced budgets within the Forest Service, the agencies ability to conduct adequate maintenance on existing trails will be minimal. OG could assist with trail maintenance and seasonal closures.

The potential listing of some fish stocks in the Columbia River Basin has led to more restrictive fishing regulations. Guides could act on behalf of the agencies (FS & ODFW) to inform their clientele of pending fishing regulations and the status of fish in the basin. This would be particularly critical for people visiting the area from out-of-state.

5. Extent to which existing permits are used:

Currently there are 6 outfitter-guides operating on the Hood River RD. American Alpine Institute operates a climbing guide service and is authorized to use 4 client days on Eliot Glacier on the north side of Mt. Hood. They have not used this area in several years since no clients have expressed interest in it. Wy'east Nordic and Art of Adventure are authorized to use the north side of Mt. Hood for climbing and skiing for an estimated 75 client days. Timberline summer ski camps are authorized to use the Bennett Pass/Gumjuwac and Tamanawas Fall/East Fork trail. Tad Burke is authorized to use 49 XC skier client days and 56 summer use days. Bus Gibson, currently working for the Multnomah County Parks and Recreation Department, has applied for conducting guided hikes and auto tours. The Mazamas (Portland based climbing club) have also applied for a climbing and nordic skiing permit. There is an estimated 82 client days scheduled for the Hood River Ranger District in their application. This is an approximate total of 366 client days authorized currently on the Hood River RD. It is estimated that approximately 150 client days are actually used. So far there have been no conflicts between user groups noted on the trails.



## 6. Level of use and use conflict:

## Carrying Capacity

The carrying capacity for the Hood River RD was calculated using these figures as follows:

Land Designation	Acres	RVD/ac/yr Coeff.	Totals
Bull Run Watershed	35	0	-
The Dalles Watershed	449	0	-
Roaded Modified	88,015	12.4	1,091,386
Roaded Natural	22,483	11.1	249,561
Rural	1,066	85	90,610
Semi-Primitive Non Motor	63,741	1.0	63,741
Total	175,791 acres		1,495,298 RVDs

The current estimate for use on the Hood River RD based on recreation receipts, and visitor counts is 581,403 visitors logging some 217,593 RVDs for 1993. This would indicate that current use is well within the estimated recreational carrying capacity for the Ranger District. This carrying capacity is based on ROS class which is a social measure and does not reflect physical or biological impacts on other resources.

For comparison, the Hood River County Chamber of Commerce reported an estimated 661,800 visitor to Hood River County in 1993.

While the previous discussion would indicate that current use is within carrying capacity for the Ranger District as a whole, it is recognized that the use is not evenly distributed throughout the District. The bulk of use on the Hood River Ranger District occurs along the Hwy 35 corridor. The Dog River and East Fork trails are heavily used trails where some resource damage is occurring in the form of erosion. This has led to increased trail maintenance and a seasonal closure on these trails.

Historically, the demand for guide services in the Hood River area has not been very high. With the increase in tourism, it may now be possible to support some guide services in the area. By allowing some competition, this would ensure a variety of quality services provided for the public to choose from.

The estimated dispersed summer use (Memorial Day to Labor Day) on the Hood River Ranger District is 58,935 visitors for 1993. (as opposed to the estimate of 581,403 for the entire year; 380,000 people visit MHM during the winter) This estimate is based on car counts and statistical sampling data collected during the summer of 1993. This estimate is based on use between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Car counts were taken at Rainy Lake, Wahtum Lake, East Fork Trailhead (Robinhood campground), Pollalie Cr, Kinnickinnick (Laurance Lake), Tamanawas Falls Trailhead and Lost Lake. Dispersed use at these sites includes camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, mtn biking, horseback riding or combination of activities.

XC skiing use on the Hood River Ranger District is estimated to be 26,950 visitors. This is based on car counts and statistical sampling data collected during the winter of 1992/93. Data was collected from the Teacup Lake, Clark Cr, Pocket Cr, Bennett Pass and Little John Snowparks.

## CONCLUSIONS

I have determined that there is a need for some limited outfitters and guides on the Hood River Ranger District.

When considering the Recreation Guiding Principles listed in the Forest Plan, primarily that the Forest Service by leaders in providing environmental education and outdoor recreation as part of urban outreach efforts, and considering the projected budget for the Forest in the future, it is clear that the Forest cannot meet this guiding principle on its own. Outfitter Guides who would be qualified to provide interpretive services and environmental education programs could be used to meet this objective.

Growth in Mountain Biking use on the Ranger District has also had an impact on trail maintenance needs. The ability of the Forest to do adequate maintenance on the trails will diminish in the future as our budgets decline, so it would be necessary for the Forest to seek partners in helping to maintain the trails. Again, qualified guides could assist in the performance of trail maintenance work. They would have a high degree of ownership in the condition of the trail since their business would depend upon the condition of the trail.

The decline of fishing stocks within the Columbia River Basin is becoming a more critical issue. Fishing regulations are becoming more restrictive and complex. Timely dissemination of information regarding fisheries regulations is largely a State of Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife responsibility but the Forest could assist through an outfitter-guide.

The current business climate around Hood River is not sufficient to support a large outfitting program. I have determined that the Hood River Ranger District (outside of Wilderness areas) can sustain up to 500 client days for guided hiking/cross-country ski/interpretive programs, 250 client days of mountain biking, 200 client days of fishing and 50 client days of horseback riding. This determination is subject to revision if these use figures are reached or exceeded.

## Mitigation Measures:

### The Dalles Watershed

1. No stock or personnel will be allowed into the Dalles Watershed.
2. Outfitter-guide operation should not interfere with existing Cattle and Horse allotments. Existing gates should be kept closed to prevent stock from wandering into the Dalles Watershed.

## Range

3. Corral placement at Gibson Prairie needs to be outside of riparian areas. The Hood River Saddle Club also has an interest in using this facility. Any work done on the site would need to have their involvement. There is also a Girl Scout group that is doing some rehabilitation work on the camp.

## Trail

4. Trail conditions will need to be monitored to ensure the trails are maintained in a safe condition. Of particular concern is the maintenance of drainage. Some trail maintenance may need to be performed by permit holders.
5. Commercial use on Hood River Ranger District will avoid high use areas where resource damage is occurring.

## Public Use

6. Gibson Prairie Horsecamp will be signed to remain open to public when in use by an outfitter-guide. Commercial use will not interfere with public use of the facility.

## Other

7. Following FS Handbook guidelines, propose issuing temporary permits for the first season or two prior to issuing a long-term permit.

## T&amp;E Plants

8. FS to monitor sensitive plant sites.

## V. LITERATURE CITED

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