

**Mt. Emily Recreation Area (MERA)
Joint Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, February 4, 2025**

Agenda

- Convene @ 6:00 PM- Misener Conference Room at 1001 4th street
- Public comment- (3 minutes per individual)
- Approve Minutes of last meeting November 19, 2024

Topics

- Selecting MAC Chair for 2025 – Forest Warren, **Action Item**
- Trails Sub-Committee Report – Aric Johnson, **Discussion/ Action Item**
- Special use of trail 409 (lgo) for two events – Sean Lerner, **Action Item**
- Expansion of skills area around Owsley Canyon TH – Tyler Brooks, **Action Item**
- Motorized Trail Closures Update – Josh Ford, **Informational**
- Parking Program – Josh Ford, **Informational**
- Master Plan Amendments- Josh Ford, **Informational**

Future Business -

Next meeting- Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Meeting Schedule; First Tuesday of February May, August, November

Mt. Emily Recreation Area (MERA)
Joint Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Agenda

- **Convene @ 6:04 PM**- Daniel Chaplin Building Conference Room at 1001 4th street –

- **Committee Members:** Katrina Gains, Chris Evans, Aric Johnson, Norm Paullis, Forrest Warren, Ian Caldwell, Mark Barber, Bill Gerst, Doug Hislop

Online: Elaine La Rochelle

Staff: Josh Ford

- **Attendees:** John Lamoreau, Bart Barlow, Pam Barlow, DK, Greg Gaines, Ed Mosman, Jeff Weaver

Public comment- (3 minutes per individual)

Ed: Been working on Red Ledge trail which is steep black diamond trail. Concerned that trail will be hard to maintain if races use the trail. Requesting that future races are not held there.

Weaver: Has Property on SE Corner of MERA. Used to be able to access his property from the access Road from the Lower Igo (Horse Trailer) Parking Area on Igo Lane. Would like to use this access point with vehicles about 6 times a year.

John Lamoreau: Had a former student driving 60 mph on Igo Lane and got chased down by a landowner who was upset. Think the road should be posted as 35mph. Supportive of parking fee, if funds go back to MERA.

Weaver: Talked to someone at county who said it is a county road and 45mph.

Bart Barlow: Thank Forrest for hard work on trail. Raised about \$16,000 in funds. Got most of trail done and will finish in the spring. In favor of Parking Permit Program. Want to have

a decision making process of how the funds are spent. Want to make sure there are checks and balances with the use of funds. Think the Advisory Committee should have a say in where the funds go.

Pam: Have concerns that Whoopsy Doo is closed to uphill use. Handed out written letter. Would like to see trail open to uphill traffic for hikers. Support closures that are approved by advisory committee and have public comment. Dangerous walking downhill with back to mt bikers. Many people want to make loops. Concerned about conflicts between user groups. Concerned that public funds were used to build the trail.

- **Minutes:** Noticed a typo on page 2, Trail Projects: Sting for grass should be String for grass. **Motion by Katrina to approve minutes of August 6, 2024. Second by Aric. All in favor.**

Topics

New Items to add to agenda: Red Ledge, Access to Weaver Property, Parking Fee Accounting and one-way access to Whoopsy Doo. **Motion by Katrina to add topics, second by Doug. All in favor. 26:30**

Logging Update- Josh Ford - Informational: Red Apple got some of the log piles moved out. Truck broke down and can't get in until next year. Will burn piles in a couple of weeks. Got funding to finish writing Forest Plan. Been doing some thinning by hand where mastication could not reach.

Parking Program – Josh – Took Proposal to County Commissioners and they approved it. Drew up an ordinance and will have first reading on December 4th. Will need to have a second reading. Funds will go to MERA non-motorized program. Some funds will need to pay for Fire Protection. Would like to see criteria of how funds will be used. Can put in the plan that the committee will review the budget in August Meeting since the county is on a fiscal year. Taking public comments now for Parking Program. Might be able to start in 2025.

Worked on Mainline and Easy Out. Will continue to work on next spring. There was cultural survey done on it.

Dead Bull Trail – Ian, Mark and Josh worked on flagging in a new section of motorcycle trail. Will build next year.

Red ledge Trail is done, except a little work on the ends, but waiting to open until next year.

The Jump Line that BMSTC has been work on is put off until next spring.

Upper Igo Trail, which Barts was working on is almost done.

Naming New Trail. Wanted to keep consistent with other names such as Pebbles. Thinking of Rubble Trail. Bart likes Rubble. **Ian motion to name it “Rubble” Norm second. All in Favor**

Bill motion to rename Igo Edge to Flintstone, have trail from Intersection 10 to Pebbles. Chris second. All in favor.

Request for Access to Jeff Weaver Property. Would like access to the west end of his property from the Lower Igo Trailhead. Would like access with truck and/or ATV. Have been allowed with previous landowner. Need to check with SHPO, ODF&W. Might need to do some work to the surface and may need culvert. Will need some sort of permit. Ian made Motion to be supportive of Josh researching options to allow Weaver vehicle access to his property from Igo lane. Doug second. All in favor.

Red Ledge Trail. Ed – requesting that the Red Ledge Trails is not used for events, since it will not hold up to that type of use. It is designed as a downhill only trail. Will be very hard to repair. **Aric made a Motion that Red Ledge Trail prohibited to be use for organized races. Elaine Second. All in favor.**

One-way only for Whoopsy Doo Trail. Designated Whoopsy Doo, Ricochet and Skills Slalom as one-way trails in November 2023 meeting. Removed upper hotshot from original concept. People like to walk Whoopsy Doo in both directions. Should have more public involvement with these decisions. Some downhill Mt Bike Trails should allow uphill hiking. Other trails with big features should not allow uphill hiking. **Aric motion to create**

subcommittee to review the trail system and identify appropriate type and direction of use.

Second by Katrina. All in favor. Subcommittee: Katrina, Aric, Forrest, Josh, Bart is interested in helping.

Master Plan Amendments. Taking public comments until Feb 4. It is on the county website.

Adjourned at 7:41

Public Comment

MERA Master plan/parking program

Received via email 11/14/24

Dear Mr. Ford,

I am contacting you to express my opposition to parking fees at MERA.

It is a fact that many people in our area are hurting financially. To have to pay \$5 to \$30 to park in the woods is a serious insult to residents of our valley who are just getting by.

Government at all levels have been working to squeeze every nickel possible out of the outdoor recreating public. The US Forest service has instituted a reservation system that has increased its revenue, but is a nightmare for the using public. Forest Service policy is not your fault, but it is a great disappointment to see Union County embrace this pay-to-play system.

Thank you,

Jim Kunkel

Received via email 11/14/24

Melanie Nave

Requiring fees for this area would greatly limit accessibility to low income families in the area. This trail system is one of very few in the county and I hope that you will find a way to ensure access to this trail system stays available to all people in our community who love the trail systems of Mera.

I as an avid user of the trail system would no longer be able to afford to take my girls here which I have done since they were grubs. Please rethink parking fees as it would greatly impact families in our communities access to enjoying the outdoors with young children.

Received via email 11/14/24

From: Linda Birnbaum <birnbaumlinda42@gmail.com>

Date: November 14, 2024 at 6:07:43 PM PST

To: jford@unioncounty.org

Subject: MERA: Proposed parking fee.

Good idea; the proposed fee is reasonable for most people. I do hate to see "free" recreational opportunities limited for folks on any kind of financial social support. Proof of receiving benefits such as WIC, food stamps, welfare should receive a waiver or free pass. Bicyclists and horseback riders can certainly afford the pass, but many hikers maybe not.

Sent from my iPhone

Received via email 11/14/24

Lee A Miller

Mera was perfect until it became Mera. So-called improvements, did nothing to improve the area. Now you want to charge for parking. Parking and fees are the most regressive tax possible. The people who can't afford to go to the movie or pay to camp at Wallowa Lake or eat at the restaurants in town, can at least go for a walk in the mountains for free. Parking and use fees always drive out the people who need the areas the most. Maybe you should tax people who have an income over \$100,000 to pay to maintain the improvements at Mera that were not needed. The idea of public use areas, parks, libraries, swimming pools was to allow the public to use those places no matter what their income is. The public was taxed to pay for those public use areas. The taxes were based on ability to pay. Now instead of convincing the public that it is in their interest to create public use areas you take the easy way out and put fees on everything. Next it will be toll roads and we will live in hell.

This is a personal email to you and other than my opinion that fees should not be charged, it is not to be shared. Thank you.

Received Via email 1/30/25

Jill Finney

Good morning,

I read through the parking pass plan and appreciate the thought put into it. Being able to have an annual pass is nice as I have not used some day fee areas because I didnt have the cash on me that weekend. I would like to provide a possible opportunity for those that find it a financial burden to be offered a free pass if they volunteer during your cleanup and work days? I do not know your rules around volunteers, but it may be a good incentive to get more people out helping during those work days. Thank for the opportunity voice concerns by the public.

-Jill Finney