

C4C Community Builders Meeting

October 2024 meeting notes

Attendees:

21 attendees, 4 first-timers

- Kellen Klein, C4C Executive Director
- Sarah McDougall, C4C Board President
- Jane Paxson, C4C Board Vice President
- Lauren DeRocher, Acting Ranger, Sisters Ranger District
- Jeremy Fields, Sisters Ranger District
- Cheryl Pellerin, Sisters Habitat, Romeo's Joy, City Council candidate
- Sherry Brainerd, community citizen and volunteer
- Rennie Morrell, STARS
- Diane Prescott, Three Sisters Historical Society
- Sue Stafford, The Nugget
- Mike Deal, Age-Friendly Sisters Country
- Danna McNeese, Sisters Community Leadership Initiative
- Kerry, community volunteer
- Katara Woodbridge, Explore Sisters
- Liz Wise, community volunteer
- Dawn Cooper, Roundhouse Foundation
- Hannah Joseph, Seed to Table
- Jane Ann Pighin, Council on Aging
- Kathy Campbell, 100 Women Who Care Sisters
- Chris Laing, 100 Women Who Care Sisters
- April Farmer, Soul Blossom Childcare

Remarks from Lauren Derocher, Sisters Ranger District

- Lauren is currently acting as Ranger while Ian Reid is on a 4 month assignment in CA. Typically she is the natural resource manager.
- High level overview of Sisters Ranger District:
 - One ranger district out of the Deschutes National Forest. The forest as a whole is 1.6 million acres. Sisters District manages about 350,000 acres, up to the crest of the Cascades.
 - Notable features:
 - two wild and scenic rivers (Whychus and Metolius)
 - three wilderness areas (Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, Three Sisters).
 - 25 campgrounds
 - Hundreds of miles of trails
 - Permit outfitters, guides, organizational/youth camps, general stores, other facilities to operate on the landscape
 - Over 100 private residences (private cabins on leased lands)

- Permit a lot of forest products – christmas trees, mushrooms, cone collection, firewood, etc.
 - Utility corridors, power lines, etc.
 - During the summer/peak season, they have about 110 staff working for the ranger district.
- What's happening right now for the district:
 - It's still fire season, but fortunately it's been relatively quiet on the Sisters Ranger District this year. No large fires. However, there have been several large ones in the Deschutes forest and across the broader region. Staff has been going out to support those, both as firefighters and overhead staff (finances, resources, public information, etc.)
 - Still TBD if there will be a prescribed burning window this fall. "A lot of factors that have to come together for that to happen."
 - Natural resources:
 - Continue to work on Indian Ford watershed restoration plan. Part of a 5-year plan. Includes restoration projects out at Black Butte Swamp, and no looking at upper Black Butte Swamp. Working with several partners like BBR, Think Wild, Trout Unlimited, Soil & Water Conservation District, Warm Springs Tribe, etc.
 - Removed Tract C bridge along the Metolius River. Hadn't been used in 10+ years, was deemed unsafe. Borrowed a trail crew from Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area to safely hoist the bridge and bring it to shore. This ensured they didn't need to have any equipment in the river itself to preserve all the scenic qualities of the river.
 - Partnership with Sisters Elementary School. Each grade paired with Natural Resources Staff, who take them out into the forest to do hands-on workshop, educational programming, etc.
 - Reminder that every 4th grader gets a free National Forest pass!
 - Have project planning for vegetation management ongoing. Released comment period this morning for WUI management near BBR. Also working on Cougar Rock, Green Ridge, other areas.
 - Sisters Trails realignment, adding trails, decommissioning some. Will continue field analysis on that through the winter.
 - Ranger Station
 - New ranger station is currently being built! All staff will be housed there, current ranger station will be demolished and turned into landscaping and visitor parking. Due to be opened in July 2025.
 - Warehouse is about a year old.
- Comments from Jeremy Fields, Special Forest Products manager
 - Manages permitting of forest products
 - Also a Federal Enforcement Officer. Records where people are camping, works closely with the Sheriffs Office, Deschutes County Behavioral Health, fire district, to ensure they're aware of where folks are camping and helping the

houseless/forest dwelling community access resources and enforcement where needed.

- Serves as liaison between forest service and Sisters Community Leadership Initiative. They pick up trash in the forest every week on a 10-mile loop, also offer water jugs to forest dwellers. Pick up 4-6 cubic yards of trash per week.
- Notes/Q&A
 - In general, forest service requires people in the woods to dig a hole and bury human waste
 - The ranger district has a handful of buildings/bunkhouses that they offer for seasonal workers, but not for permanent residents. These aren't free, but they're cheaper than what folks could afford in town and also gives folks a landing spot as they look for longer-term local housing.
 - The primary conference room in the new ranger district building is being developed to offer after-hours use by the general public. Likely will accommodate 35-45 people.
 - When the forest district does mowing, it's the firefighters themselves doing the mowing. They stay very vigilant when the fire risk levels are higher.
 - The County's rules and ordinances don't apply to federal lands; the forest service has their own rules that they have to follow.
 - Enforcement: As a general concept, they approach with "three Es":
 - Engineering – design the site/locations to ensure compliance, make it intuitive
 - Education – educate the public to encourage compliance
 - Enforcement – the hardest to implement. Aim to have the first two Es help avoid the need for enforcement wherever possible.
 - Currently, the Sisters District's law enforcement position is vacant, but Deschutes office has been helping out. Also working with the county sheriffs. Also have Forest Protection Officers; no gun/badge/vest, but additional certification that allows them to write certain tickets, provide education, etc. But not true law enforcement.
 - "Can be tricky to catch people" committing violations in the forest.
 - Jeremy "spends most of my day educating, giving people opportunities to be successful" before shifting to enforcement. Spends a lot of time talking about the privilege of having a national forest, that it belongs to everyone, and emphasizing the responsibility everyone has to steward that land.
 - Houselessness is a challenge that many national forests are dealing with across the West. Forests are experimenting with a lot of different approaches to addressing the issue. Has to be a collaborative effort with fellow organizational partners, agencies, nonprofits, etc. Definitely mindful not to force folks into the backcountry.

Organizational Updates:

- C4C
 - Outlaws Night

- Community Forum
 - WDYDWA!
 - We are looking for board members! Looking for folks who have time to invest in the organization – working on events, strategic planning partnership, “showing up for things.” If you know of folks with new energy, looking for places to dig in, we’d love to be connected.
- Sisters Community Leadership Initiative
 - Did first round of RV and car removal from the forest a few weeks ago. 6 RVs were dismantled and taken to landfill/scrap metal recycling; 11 cars towed, 5 by the forest service.
 - Had a company from Prineville get in touch; offered to be a part of the project
- Explore Sisters
 - Katara is new marketing director for the organization
 - Over 3,000 people have gone through new Visitor Information center
- Roundhouse Foundation
 - Currently going through 180 applications from the fall cycle; decisions will be made mid-November
 - Has been looking deeply into natural disaster support, keen to support more in that area
- Seed to Table
 - Two farmers markets left – Oct. 20 and 27
 - Two volunteer days this month – 10/10 from 3-5, 10/25 from 10-12. You get to eat carrots! Kids welcome if they’re with a grown-up
- 100 Women Who Care Sisters
 - Next meeting will be in November. Now have 99 members!
 - Congrats to FAN for receiving the latest grant!
- Sisters Science Club
 - There are lots of current volunteer opportunities
 - New board of 8 people
 - Larry Price talking about quantum mechanics at their next event!
- Three Sisters Historical Society
 - Museum is open Fri-Sun
 - Sunday 10/20 they’ll have their next Fireside series event at the fire hall. Mike Barry will be speaking about the “Bull Flats/Tumalo Reservoir Fiasco.”
- Age-Friendly Sisters Country
 - “What Do You Do With An Idea” workshop on November 10 at the fire hall. Trying to demystify the process of starting up a new community initiative, how to fund it, etc. Will be both in-person and livestreamed.
- STARS
 - Looking for board members, especially those with fundraising and development skills
 - Also looking for volunteers! Not just drivers, but dispatchers, marketing support, etc.
 - For drivers, they pay \$0.50/mile reimbursement.

- Their demand is up 34% over the past year. Shows the service is working, but also a great need.
 - Will be launching a “ride sponsorship” campaign soon to invite community members to sponsor a ride.
- Soul Blossom Sisters childcare center
 - Open invitation – they are cleaning up the garden area at the old elementary school. They’re doing this with Sisters Community Garden, but would welcome additional volunteers! Wednesday 10/16 from 4-5:30. Meet at the flag pole at the old Sisters Elementary School.
 - Enrollment is low.
 - There is a big state challenge with families who qualify for ERCD or Preschool Promise but there is no funding to provide space for them. Soul Blossom could use subsidies to help families afford the cost of childcare while ensuring their staff receive a living wage, but there is no state funding available.
 - The state allocated \$50 million to build childcare centers, but no funding for helping subsidize low-income families.
- Sisters Habitat for Humanity
 - Just did a home dedication for a couple this week.
 - Having a benefit concert on Friday 10/25 – Jim Isaac-Chua, international concert pianist. Will be at the high school.
 - Just moved their office into the old Ponderosa Properties building next to Sisters Coffee.
 - Habitat received a grant for workforce housing from the City
- Romeo’s Joy
 - Action Team of AFSC. Provides animatronic pets for those living with disabilities or those at risk of social isolation
 - Last week donated 11 pets to the Sisters School District special education department.
 - There are over 130 students in the SSD special education program. Ranges from permanent physical/mental disabilities to those who have experienced a traumatic event.
 - Have now donated 53 animatronic pets
- Council on Aging
 - Free meals on Tuesday out of Sisters Community Church
 - They’ll be hosting our Feb Community Builders meeting
 - Will have a table at Living Well With Dementia Sisters’ resource fair on November 14th
- Sherry Brainerd
- Random updates:
 - Tomorrow night – Sisters City Council candidate forum at the fire hall at 6 pm.
 - One participant recommended watching the webinar on “water of the Pacific Northwest.” Event took place yesterday at Deschutes County Fairgrounds, featured national congresspeople and other stakeholders.