

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

June 10, 2020

Committee Members Present: Lynne Breese, Steve McGuire, John Dehler, Frank Porfily, Trent Smith, Andy Gallagher, Mike Lunn, Teresa Rumble, Tim Deboodt

Members absent: Ston McDaniel,

Guests present: Greg Jackle (OD&W), Bob O'Neil (Crook County Road Master), Bruce Scanlon (OID), Eric Blaine (County Council)

Public Present: Greg Ontko, John Breese, Alison Green, Mike Ervin, Dan Hammond, Melinda Kestler, Cliff Kiser, Gayle Hunt, Steve Ontko, Eric Bush, Pete Sharp

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Steve McGuire @ Crook County 4H building.

Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Minutes: Andy moved to approve as amended. Mike seconded. Motion passed. Teresa abstained.

No Agency Reports

Old Business:

Public Comment process: A review of the public comment process adopted at the Jan. 2020 meeting was reviewed. The original motion was to have a 2 month trial process allowing public input during the discussion of each topic brought up to the Committee at the time the Committee is discussing it. Since the group has not met since March, the discussion was to extend the trial period. Frank moved to extend for 2 more months, the existing process. Mike seconded. Motion passed.

New Business:

Greg Jackle, District Wildlife Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife spoke to the group concerning big game population numbers, management objectives and current monitoring projects for the 3 game management units that overlay Crook County (Grizzly, Ochoco and Maury Units). Greg has served as the local biologist for the last 7 years. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available.

There are 2 types of management objectives (M.O.) for big game. Winter range populations and Buck/Bull rations (per 100 hd. of adult females). For Deer M.O.'s, the last numbers were adopted by the Game Commission in 1982. Counts for wildlife include those on private lands (not just those on public

lands). Deer numbers are significantly lower (actual numbers) when compared to M.O.'s. There was concern expressed during public comment about continuing to hunt deer since numbers are low. There was a comment that ODF&W was more concerned about revenue from tag sales than they were about having viable populations. Questions were also asked about winter supplemental feeding. Greg responded that there is very little supplemental feeding. Frank asked if ODF&W was concerned about wildlife use (specifically elk) in riparian use. Greg said that the public land management agencies manage those resources.

Additional questions asked:

Were elk transplanted into Crook County? (Steve Ontko responded that he knew of releases in the 1950's)

Why were wildlife numbers either non-existent historically or in very low numbers? (pioneer and trapper journals report a wildlife desert in the 1800's)

With tracking, can ODF&W use that information to monitor feed availability?

What is the role of predators in managing wildlife populations?

Buck Creek Road

Bob O'Neil, County Road Master addressed the group with a proposal before the County Court to renew a 5-year road closure agreement on Buck Creek Rd. with the GI Ranch. In 2006, the County and GI Ranch agreed to a year round road closure for a portion of Buck Creek Rd. The original agreement required renewals every 5 years. The agreement was renewed in 2011 but not in 2016 due to change in staff both at the County and on the GI. The original road closure was in part agreed to in order to maintain the safety of some historical structures (Bill Brown cabin) and the road itself. Its remoteness makes it difficult to monitor for vandalism and misuse. The agreement includes the ability of the Historical Society and others to access historical places behind the gates with permission from the GI. The agreement also allows the either party to void the road closure agreement if something changes. GI is doing minimal road maintenance now, and the County is maintaining the right-of-way.

The Committee discussed the issues. Steve spoke to specific language in the County's Policy about road closures (pg. 22 bullet 1 and 2). Teresa asked about alternative access to large blocks of public lands and Bob provided a map of the area, addressing access from 12 mile road and the first portion of Buck Creek Rd. Frank asked how this affected BLM and if they had been contacted. Bob didn't think they had been but showed how their need to access lands was addressed through administrative action. Eric Bush asked how the transportation sub-committee work might impact this decision and Pete Sharp mentioned that he was familiar with this road and was supportive of the closure agreement. Cliff Kiser asked if future requests might be treated the same way?

Trent noted that 12 mile Rd. to Grindstone provided the area with access to secondary roads in the area (access to public lands) and that there was no "net loss" as stated in the Policy. Steve asked if the Committee wanted to endorse the agreement or give guidance to the Court? Andy moved to support the 5 year renewal. Lynne seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

OID Fish Waiver

Bruce Scanlon, OID Manager addressed the group on the continued joint effort (City, County and OID) to build a hydro project on Bowman Dam. Bruce reminded the group about the history of the project and their effort to obtain a waiver to the State's requirement to construct fish passage over Bowman Dam as a part of the project requirements. Fish passage is estimated to cost 70 – 200 million dollars making the project impractical.

Current Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) require anytime a fish barrier (dam) is modified, fish passage must be a part of the project. ORS also provides for a waiver process if ODFW determines the "net benefit" of proposed habitat improvement equals or exceeds the benefit that by-pass would provide. District is proposing a set of habitat improvement projects below the dam that they feel meets the benefit rules and matches the scope (ability to pay) of the hydro project (estimated annual revenues of \$300,000). Projects include the reduction of fish bubble disease (total dissolved gases) that result from current design of water release during high flows spilling from the outlet works, reconstruction of District diversion structure on Ochoco Creek (Prineville Golf Course), introduction of gravels into the Crooked River, replacing gravel sources now inaccessible because of the dam and the construction of better flow control at the Dam.

Letters responding to ODFW's Net Benefit analysis are due from the public by Monday, June 22. The Fish By-Pass Review Committee is holding a public meeting on Friday, June 26. Individual and Committee comments are welcome. Cliff Kiser asked if other alternative were explored, specifically a syphon over the dam. Bruce address that different alternatives had been evaluated.

Eastside Screens Review – 21" rule

A draft letter in support of the Region 6 review of the Eastside Screens, specific to the 21" rule was discussed. The original rule was adopted in 1995 and was intended to be in place for only 6 months. The interim rule has been in place now for 25 years. The draft had been written for the County and the County asked the Committee to review and discuss it. Lynne provided some edits to the letter. Teresa talked about the rules impact on our local sawmills. Lynne moved to have the letter adopted by the County with the approved edits. Teresa seconded. Motion passed.

Committee member reports:

Teresa asked about the County's webpage and the lack of information regarding the Natural Resources Policy and information about the Committee. Tim will contact the County's webmaster and get information for the public on it.

Move to Executive Session:

Meeting for the public was concluded and Steve moved the Committee into Executive Session. Steve had Eric read the following:

The Crook County Natural Resources Advisory Committee will now meet in executive session for the purpose of consulting with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

The executive session is held in pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2)(h).

Representatives of the news media and designated staff shall be allowed to attend the executive session. All other members of the audience are asked to leave the room. Representatives of the news media are specifically directed not to report on any of the deliberations during the executive session, except to state the general subject of the session as previously announced. No decision may be made in executive session. At the end of the executive session, we will return to open session and welcome the audience back into the room.*

** The governing body may choose to allow other specified persons to attend the executive session. See Barker v. City of Portland, 67 Or App 23, 676 P2d 1391 (1984).*

Steve closed the Executive session. The doors were open to the public and Eric read the reopening of the regular meeting.

Eric provide the following language for the Committee's discussion. "Move to direct staff to schedule a special public meeting to consider public comments regarding the May 12, 2020 draft letter from the Crook County Court to the USFS regarding the update of the Ochoco Wildhorse environmental assessment".

Mike moved to adopt the statement as presented by Eric. Andy Seconded. Motion passed, with 1 abstention.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Next meeting July 8, 2020