

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

September 9, 2020

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

Members absent: Trent Smith, Ston McDaniel

Guests present: Emily Platt (FS), Amanda Roberts (BLM), Bruce Scanlon (OID)

Public Present: John Breese, Melinda Kestler, Gayle Hunt,

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Minutes: Lynne moved to approve the August 12th draft minutes. Teresa seconded. Motion Passed.

Agency Reports: Amanda Roberts (BLM) talked about how the agencies were focused on fire response the last month. EA for the Indian Creek Allotment Permit renewal was posted on-line for comments.

Eastside Screen Review

Emily Platt (Region 6 FS) guest speaker from the Regional Office, FS spoke to the Committee about the draft EA, Region 6 review of the Eastside Screens, specific to the 21" rule. The draft EA would affect the 6 eastside forests in eastern Oregon and southeastern Washington. The EA includes 4 alternatives that were analyzed including the no action alternative which would maintain the current interim rule. Emily spoke to the question of why the need for the review. She spoke about how the rule has implemented the last 25 years, whether or not it was meeting its original intent and the implications. She mentioned that current tree mortality in these old and large tree stands was at 8 percent, thought to be higher than it should be.

Alternatives discussed:

Alternative 1 would maintain current management.

Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative and is designed to protect old and large trees. It is a guideline rather than a standard. Old trees are defined as being 150 years of age or older, adopts a 30" DBH guideline for grand and white fir and a 21" DBH guideline for pine. A guideline is thought to provide more flexibility in management over a standard. Mike asked the question if the Courts agree with the differences between the two definitions. Some discussion was held, defining the two. This alternative

still requires that the goals of the screens be met. This alternative has an adaptive management strategy attached to it which includes a monitoring component to look at mortality of old trees. FS is looking for input as to the parameters of what to monitor.

Alternative 3 is an old tree standard. Prohibits the harvesting of trees greater than 150 years old.

Alternative 4 is the adaptive management alternative. Management would have no size or age restrictions, just adherence to the goals contained within the Screens themselves.

The results of the analysis of the 4 alternatives says that all 4 would increase the number of large trees on the landscape. The 3 new alternatives offer the FS the opportunity to shift species composition and reduce the mortality rate over current management. Wildlife benefit from the all three alternatives. There would be an increase in species in the open and late and old habitats and stable populations in the closed, late and old habitats. Social and economic impacts rank higher in the 3 alternatives with the highest positive response coming from Alternative 4. Impacts on other plants (TE) still have all protections in place thus there is no affect from any of the alternatives. For aquatics, there is also no affect since all riparian guidelines remain in place as well.

Emily stated that the Region 6 FS has extended the comment period another 30 days. Deadline to commit is now October 13. Following the close of the comment period, FS will review and respond to comments, revise the EA and issue a final decision. Following that decision notice, there will be an addition 45 day period for comment and appeal.

John asked why Alt 2 was preferred. Emily responded, indicating that Alt 2 was more socially acceptable and politically viable. It was also felt that Alt 2 had more guidance, and was more durable.

Frank asked if all this meant that more large trees would be harvested and contribute to the economy? Emily responded that the analysis did show to some degree there would be but there just wasn't that many large trees to harvest but that it would help in some cases.

Mike asked if basal area guidance was included in the review? Emily was uncertain but did feel that the alternatives did address dense trees and the impacts of competition and the change to guidelines would allow managers to address the question.

Teresa wondered if the loss of life due to a tree falling on a camper in the Ochocos could have been related to the lack of tree removal under the 21" rule? Emily was unaware of the incident and would forward the question onto Shane Jefferies, Ochoco National Forest.

Question about Alt 4 and would it be prone to more lawsuits? It was generally believed that yes, it would be because of the lack of trust the public has with forest harvest.

Why was 150 years used as the point to describe 'old' trees. The age reflects European influence on the forests but not Native American influence. Emily said it was the age chosen in the original eastside screens. It was a point, common in forest science research and it serves the purpose of protecting late and old growth.

Teresa asked at what point is a tree aged out, what is the expectant life span. Emily responded that pine generally lives longer than fir but that with competition, mortality is increased.

Mike asked if density was measured by basal area or by stems/acre? Emily was unsure.

Frank mentioned an article in the Bend Bulletin that indicated the lack of lumber was driving up housing costs. How is this information added to the review? Emily responded that the economic analysis did look at board foot production under each alternative. She also indicated that the FS thinks about this one every day.

Steve asked if the FS anticipates lawsuits with the proposed action and what is the difference in suing over the proposed alternative vs Alt 4? Emily responded that the FS is trying to build trust, build support for doing the right thing on the ground. While anticipating litigation, the parties that would be involved and the arguments over each Alt would be different.

OID Infrastructure Update

Bruce Scanlon (OID) spoke to the Committee about the draft EA for the OID Infrastructure Modernization project. There is a public virtual meeting on Sept. 16th from 6 – 7 p.m. Website information is on their webpage. Bruce reminded the Committee that this is a \$25 million dollar plan to upgrade facilities and delivery of water within the OID boundaries. Sept 30 is the deadline for public comment to the draft EA. Implementation of the proposed action could begin in 2021.

John asked Bruce about the proposed hydro project. Bruce indicated that the ODF&W Fish Screen Committee voted not to support the City/County/OID request for exception to the fish passage requirement and that the local project will be up for review before the whole ODF&W Commission on Oct 9th. Bruce said that that the Fish Screen Committee wanted more mitigation (\$\$) but that this project, because of its very small size, had no ability to expand the mitigation work over what was proposed within the project's request.

Bruce indicated the District hopes to be able to deliver water up to Oct 1. Reservoir levels are reaching critically low levels.

Good of the Order

Discussion was held on the County's draft letter responding to the Eastside Screen Draft EA. Lynne indicated she liked the letter. Frank said he was in favor of increasing timber harvest instead of letting it burn. Steve spoke to his question earlier to Emily Platt regarding the differences in litigation over the two alternatives. Teresa said the review and the 3 alternatives was a place to start. She liked the idea of moving away from a standard and to a guideline. She thinks the outcome will be more timber being sold/harvested for lumber. Lynne shared her proposed edits to the letter.

John said as a private forester, he supported the letter and thinks Alt 4 is the best alternative for Crook County and its forests.

Teresa moved to present the draft letter with Lynne's edits to the Court for their adoption and signatures. John seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Frank presented to the Committee, pictures of the Frog Fire (post fire impacts) and asked about salvage logging. Frank asked if the Committee wanted to advise the County Court to push the FS for salvage before the trees lost their market value. Steve indicated that in the County Natural Resources Policy, pg. 35, bullet #4, that indeed, post fire harvest was required. Steve asked that the October, 2020 meeting agenda include a discussion on the FS rehab plan for the Frog Fire and to specifically address post fire salvage. Frank moved to add this topic to the agenda, Teresa seconded. Motion passed.

Teresa asked about the private property owner along Ochoco Reservoir that had blocked public access to the shoreline through their driveway. In response to the blockage, the public had created a new access point and now ODOT has blocked that. Frank indicated that he knew the landowner and would contact them to get their side of the story. He will report back in October.

Public comment:

Gayle Hunt asked if any of the Alternative discussed in the review today were ranked by their ability to sequester carbon and was watershed/water tables considered in the aquatic review? She indicated that good water is necessary in order to be able to use it. Emily had already left the discussion. It was suggested to Gayle that she include those comments in a response letter to the FS.

The question was asked, what is the wood market for pine? Steve responded that all our mills used to use pine. Fir species were traded to other mills in exchange for their pine. He commented that there is a world market for pine. Used in window and door parts. He emphasized that lumber products are sold worldwide.

Teresa moved to adjourn. Frank Seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting ended at 3:07 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14, 2020