

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

December 9, 2020

Committee Members Present: Lynne Breese, Steve McGuire, Ston McDaniel, John Dehler, Andy Gallagher, Mike Lunn, Tim Deboodt

Members absent: Trent Smith, Frank Profily, Teresa Rumble

Guests present: Johanna Kovarik (FS), Kevin Keown (FS), Jacob Young (FS)

Public Present: none

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Minutes:

John moved to accept the November 18th, 2020 draft minutes as updated. Ston seconded. Motion passed.

Agency Reports:

Kevin Keown (FS) provided the updates for the Ochoco National Forest. Kevin reported that the Wild Horse EA had been signed and that the objection period ends January 4, 2021.

Walton Lake EA was signed for final decision

The Black Mountain Vegetation project was still in litigation but some sale administration is moving forward.

Frog Fire update: the log decks created as part of the firefighting activities have been sold. Danger trees within the road corridors have been evaluated and the solicitation of sale for these trees is out for bid.

Mill Creek Restoration project was announced and scoping on proposed actions will soon be released.

Bellwether project is moving ahead with ODF contract requirements coming to an end at the end of the year (2020).

Sunflower EA

Jacob Young and Johanna Kovarik spoke to the committee about the Sunflower EA. Jacob reported that there were no substantive changes between the topics covered in during the scoping process and the

release of the draft EA. Proposed road closure miles is the same with approximately 60 percent of the road mileage in the project area remaining open. Proposed road closures is a mix of permanent and administrative closures. Road closures will not impact administration of the grazing permits. Johanna reported that the FS did have conversations with Grant County over the proposed road closures.

Jacob reported that the preferred Alternative did not decrease grazing AUMs. Newly created riparian pastures within the allotments will enhance animal and grazing distribution and while reducing grazing impacts in the riparian areas.

The purpose of the road closures is to reduce human/elk impacts and to increase residence time by the elk on the National Forest, thereby reducing wildlife pressure/damage on adjoining private property. Increased resident time by the elk on the Forest will also improve hunting opportunities by the public during elk hunting seasons. Jacob reported that the result of keeping more elk on the Forest for longer periods will not negatively impact grazing by permittees. Jacob reported that water availability and riparian grazing standards are what limit livestock use on the allotment and not forage availability. Competition for forage by livestock and elk will not be an issue. On-going monitoring of riparian areas will determine trend of riparian condition. ODF&W is currently monitoring 30 – 35 elk (radio collared) and they hope to add an additional 15 collars in 2021. Monitoring locations of these collared elk throughout the year will help ODF&W as well as the FS in managing the elk herds in this area.

Public comment on the Sunflower EA closes December 24, 2020.

Committee Reports:

Tim reported on the field trip with Eric Bush, BLM personnel and Ston McDaniel (Committee member) to the area north of Prineville Reservoir where Mr. Bush and BLM have been trying to deal with illegal off-road/out of season vehicle travel and resource damage. Field trip was successful in Mr. Bush showing areas of concern and coming up with a plan in which BLM and Mr. Bush will work on updating signage and maintenance of those signs.

Public Comment Period: none

John moved to adjourn the meeting. Mike seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.