

## **Minutes**

### **Crook County Natural Resource Committee**

**February 10, 2021**

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

**Members absent:** Trent Smith

**Guests present:** Amanda Roberts (BLM)

**Public Present:** Melinda Kestler, John Breese, Eric Bush, Cliff Kiser, Gayle Hunt, Wayne Elmore

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 accept the January 13th, 2021 draft minutes as corrected. John seconded. Motion passed.

#### **Agency Reports:**

##### **BLM (Amanda Roberts)**

Current work load is focusing on prescribed fire on lands outside of Crook County. It is time that BLM is hiring seasonal employees. With the change in federal administration, there is a hold on any final decisions for 45 days. BLM will be making a presentation to the Natural Resources Committee regarding lands with special designations (ex. wilderness study areas (WSA)).

Cliff Kiser asked about the Indian Creek AMP and whether or not there were any appeals for the permit renewal decision. Public comment closes Feb. 19<sup>th</sup> and as of today, there are no protests filed. Final decision may be affected by the hold on all final decision making (45 days).

There was a question about juniper work in sage grouse areas. Juniper work is funded to cut and burn within this fiscal year. Actual projects are getting their final clearances. Jackpot burning is scheduled for 5000 acres. Workload is being planned out for the next 4 years.

##### **Discussion on Committee membership (current vacancies)**

Lynne started the conversation, commenting on the need to fill the current, existing vacancy and that there would be a great benefit to the business of the Committee to move forward and also fill the other 2 vacancies allowed under the Committee's By-laws. Go back to a full committee of 11 members.

Steve also mentioned his support for filling the current vacancy and Frank asked about the ability to go back to the original applications (those submitted in November, 2018)? Following additional discussion John moved to fill the current vacancy and add the other two positions to the committee. Lynne seconded. Motion passed. 1 vote for no.

In discussing the skills for recruiting new members, Mike suggested that we are missing a link to the BLM and its administrative processes. Also, the current membership could benefit from someone having knowledge of riparian and watershed management. The following list of individuals was nominated by the Committee for consideration to membership:

Wayne Elmore  
Cynthia Harper  
Steve Ontko  
Jace Rhoden  
Casey Kaiser  
Jacob Childers  
Steve Gillen  
Dan Sherwin  
Cliff Kiser  
Libby Stahancyk  
Eric Bush

The Committee asked that Tim forward this list to the County Court for their action.

#### **Wyden/Merkley Bill (River Democracy Act 2021)**

The Committee discussed the Senator's proposed bill as presented. Lynne pointed out that the bill would add approximately 4700 miles of rivers and creeks to Oregon's list of already designated federal rivers. Lynne suggested that the County send a letter to Senators Wyden and Merkley, opposing the addition of any new rivers and streams and suggested the County use the Baker County letter as a format.

Steve pointed out that the County's Natural Resources Policy points out that there are already enough rivers/creeks designated and that the Policy calls for no more. Steve also pointed out that the proposed legislation increases the lands impacted by the designation from 320 acres to 620 acres per mile of river. There is no ecological justification presented in the bill to justify an expansion of what the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act calls for. While the WSRA calls for a variety of designations (wild, scenic or recreational) the bill contains no detail as to the designation level being suggested and there is nothing that prevents the designation from changing and becoming more restrictive. There is no mention in the bill as to the fate of roads found within the proposed areas.

Andy indicated he agreed with Steve. Andy pointed out that for many of the rivers/creeks mentioned, that increased recreation would actually have a detrimental impact on the very things the Senators say they are trying to protect (habitats, water quality, etc).

Frank said he is totally opposed to the proposed bill. He is concerned that the ability to fight wildfires would be limited within areas that have the designations. He is also concerned about the limitation of logging within the designated areas.

Ston pointed out that the proposal is gross mismanagement of the land. He felt that it was critical that the County and the Committee be critical in its response and to not accept it. The way the list was created (name your favorite stream) violated the process outlined within the original WSRA. Ston felt that this was a legacy project for Wyden and Merkley. The County's response needs to be a firm no, not here.

Mike reminded the group that a Wild and Scenic River designation is different than a Wilderness designation. The original WSRA requires named water bodies to have "unique characteristics" and that the designation be used to protect the very best and keep development (dams) from being built on these stretches of rivers/creeks. He believes that the proposed list doesn't meet that criteria. Mike felt that the Senators did reach out to the public over a year ago, requesting rivers/creeks be nominated. Not participating in that process was a choice to not participate. Congress makes the final decision.

Public comment related to this conversation:

Cliff Kiser reviewed the history of the Owyhee River process, started 3 years ago and how this current proposal is a product of that. He believes that with the changes in Congress this proposal has a good chance of moving forward. Cliff wondered if through Coordination, could any changes be made? He supports the Committee's effort to stop it.

Eric Bush asked if the proposal included any new designations below Bowman Dam. How would it affect river management for flood control?

John Breese cited the Steans Mtn. designation from years ago that required certain actions to take place (build a fence) but took Rep. Walden 3 more attempts (bills) to actually force the BLM to build the fence. He expressed concern that "exceptions" don't really become "exceptions".

Gayle Hunt asked what are the opportunities for public meetings? For public input?

Steve moved to have the Committee encourage the County to draft a letter, similar to Baker County, to craft a county educational effort and encourage the public to write Wyden and Merkley expressing their concern of the bill. In the letter, invoke Coordination (pg. 32 Policy). Ston Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Election of Committee officers**

Chair nominations. Lynne nominated Steve to serve as Chair for 2021. John Seconded. Motion passed.

Vice-Chair nominations. John nominated Lynne. Frank seconded. Motion passed.

### **Committee member reports/Good of the order**

John raised concern about a State bill that would get rid of coyote hunting competitions as a method of reducing coyote depredations. The hearings for this bill was Feb 9<sup>th</sup>.

Mike raised concern about a Bill being proposed that would eliminate beaver trapping on public lands.

Frank provided an update on the Ochoco Forest Wild Horse Management plan. There will be a meeting with those individuals/organizations that filed objections with the Forest Service on this proposal. The meeting will be Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> and it will be a virtual meeting.

Amanda Roberts provided a clarification to the funding of projects related to grazing AMPs (a question from Eric). Amanda suggested that individuals work with their range cons to get projects funded. She mentioned that with over 300 allotments, funds are limited with less than \$20,000 per fiscal year being available. Tim asked Amanda to remind Range Cons of the County's Taylor Grazing funds that could also be used for range improvement projects within Crook County (other Counties have their own funds).

John moved to adjourn the meeting. Lynne seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.