

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

March 10, 2021

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

Members absent: Ston McDaniel, John Dehler

Guests present: Slater Turner (FS), Jeff Kitchens (BLM)

Public Present: Melinda Kestler, John Breese, Cliff Kiser, Gayle Hunt, Dan Sherwin

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Minutes:

Mike moved to accept the February 10th, 2021 draft minutes as corrected. Lynne seconded. Motion passed.

Agency Reports:

Forest Service – Slater Turner

Slater reported on current Forest Service happenings. Garry Sanders (formally with Crooked River Watershed Council) is a new hire Fish Biologist on the Ochocos. Black Mtn litigation continues. Walton Lake project is being litigated and the Regional Office held an objection meeting on the Wild Horse project in late Feb. FS is now responding to the issues raised during that meeting. Work continues on the Mill Creek project (planning phase) and the Forest has hired 36 people for the summer work season (temporary hires).

Mike Lunn asked Slater if there was a timeline for the Walton Lake litigation. Slater responded that they are responding to FOIA requests from the litigants. Department of Justice is negotiating a briefing schedule. Crook County has file an amicus brief related to the Walton Lake project.

Slater also mentions that there is now a Scoping letter seeking input for the Lemon Gulch Complex Mtn. Bike Trail System.

BLM – Jeff Kitchens

Jeff reported that the new, draft travel management maps that were started 2 years ago (July, 2019) are now back on track and are being reviewed internally. BLM has hired a new GIS technician and this project is back on track. They are working on new information Kiosks with mock-up work being completed now. New Kiosks will be tested in Crook and Deschutes Counties. This will be a good time for the Transportation sub-committee to get re-engaged in the process.

Jeff reported an increase in reporting of illegal dump sites and campsites since the weather has improved. Reports from the public are notifying BLM of abandoned vehicles/etc. BLM is tracking all reports for investigation and future clean up.

Plans are being finalized for Chimney Rock campground improvements. Improved group campsites/etc are being planned. As more funds are identified, project will be expanded.

BLM has seen a significant increase in right-of-way access permits, road improvements, etc. BLM is working to prioritize workload. Tim asked Jeff if there was an opportunity for BLM to work with County Planning Departments, to help applicants who come to the County first with a project to better understand requirements and timeline that BLM is working with.

New Business:

Tim provided the Committee with an update on the process for filling the vacancy/vacancies on the Committee. The Court reviewed the list of nominees from the February Committee meeting and asked the Committee to review and forward recommendations. Of the 11 nominees, 8 people submitted an application for membership. Tim suggested the Committee appoint a sub-committee to review applications and to submit for Committee approval, 3 names to forward to the Court. Trent asked about what is the emphasis on the backgrounds (areas of interest/expertise) that the list of applicants brings to the table. Discussion resulted. Mike asked if they were filling the 1 vacancy or if they were filling all 3 positions. Tim reported that the Court is interested in filling all 3 spots (go from a committee of 9 to a committee of 11).

Good of the order/Committee member updates:

Mike expressed concern about the water situation for the summer. Reservoir levels are currently extremely low. Snow pack as of the end of Feb. was about 80% of normal. Ochoco Reservoir is about 18% full and Prineville Reservoir is 45% full.

Lynne pointed out the OP ED in the March 7th Central Oregonian newspaper speaking out against the litigation on the Walton Lake project.

Trent talked about the current wolf information. A collared wolf is now in the south Maury Mtn area. The Crook County Wolf Committee (appointed by the County Court) will be meeting soon to review current sightings and communication with ODF&W.

Frank mentioned that he was involved in the local group dealing with the "State of Jefferson". This is a current effort to look at the issues/opportunities of eastern Oregon counties joining the State of Idaho. Frank asked if it was appropriate for this group to hear a presentation and discuss. The group was generally favorable to the idea and asked Frank to bring more information to the April meeting.

No Public Comment:

Mike moved to adjourn the meeting. Andy Seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.