

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

April 14, 2021

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

Members absent: Steve McGuire, Trent Smith

Guests present: Amanda Roberts (BLM), Mike Anderson (BLM), Kevin Keown (FS), Chris Ryan (BLM), Kyle Hensley (BLM), Slater Turner (FS), and Jeff Kitchens (BLM)

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

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by vice-Chair Lynne Breese @ Crook County 4H building.

Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Minutes:

Mike moved to accept the March 10, 2021 draft minutes. John seconded. Motion passed.

Agency Reports:

BLM: Jeff Kitchens and Amanda Roberts

Jeff and Amanda gave an update on fuels treatment projects across the District. Jeff provided an update on the reissue of the Decision Notice for the "trespass project". The current private individual will be responsible for 100 percent of the rehabilitation cost regarding the former home site and other structures. Joint responsibility between BLM and the private individual will be coordinated on an additional 8 acres requiring restoration. New temporary (summer) employees are beginning to report to work.

Jeff reported on the increasing workload associated with real estate requests. Mostly, these requests involve right-of-way access issues and permits. BLM is working on maps to help prioritize the workload but recognizes they do not have the capacity to service all requests in a timely manner. They are trying to be responsive.

John Breese asked Jeff about public access to the public lands that are landlocked around the trespass case. Jeff reported that BLM access is administrative only and there is no public access across private lands. Jeff suggested that all requests for such access should be made directly with the private landowner. Jeff knows of no intent by the private landowner to close the road.

Forest Service: Kevin Keown and Slater Turner

Kevin reported that the Black Mountain settlement agreement is at the Regional Office and Washington office. It is near completion. The Walton Lake project is under appeal and the FS is responding to information requests. FS expects Court briefings to be held this summer. The Wild Horse Management project is close to a new decision notice. The Sunflower AMP objection period ends April 26th. After this date, the FS will move forward with a Decision Notice.

Kevin reported that next fiscal year projects will include the North Fork Paulina Creek Project and the Bellwether project will be moving forward. Bellwether will have additional field surveys done this summer.

Scoping for the Lemon Gulch Trails project ends April 15th. The Joint Chiefs Project has 2021 activities scheduled and include approximately 1300 acres of non-commercial thinning. Other activities include prescribed burning, invasive weed control, native seed collection and implementation of Williams Prairie restoration. FS will spend about \$969,000 under the Joint Chiefs program this summer.

Slater updated the group on the Mill Creek project with scoping on this project ending. Next steps for this moving forward include the FS developing a range of Alternatives for analysis and public review.

Questions regarding updates:

Ston asked if there had been any objections filed for the Sunflower project. Kevin reported that he had not heard of any. Kevin also reviewed the potential timeline for Walton Lake litigation and said that actual Court dates had not been set. The earliest any work could be accomplished at Walton Lake would be this fall (2021).

Mike asked about what are the primary areas of concern related to the Walton Lake litigation. Kevin mentioned the proposed action of harvest amounts, and that treatment of the problem could have been done differently. There is a belief that the decision was pre-determined based on previous decision notices issues on this project as well as a concern that the treatment would result in a change in character of the campground (loss of large trees). Mike expressed frustration that the FS picked the EA level of analysis instead of a full EIS given the potential level of public disagreement coupled with the length of the process (taking way too long). Kevin acknowledged Mike's frustration but believes that the process used by the FS was the correct one.

Presentation/Discussion

Amanda Roberts, Area manager for Prineville BLM lead a presentation/discussion on public lands with special designations. These lands, referred to as National Conservation Lands include wilderness areas, wilderness study areas (WSA), wild and scenic river corridors, and other designations. In Oregon, approximately 3.4 million acres of lands administered by BLM have such designations. In Crook County, portions of the Oregon Badlands (2009 designated Wilderness) and WSA's include Hampton, Gerry Mtn., Sand Hollow and South Fork Crooked River. Wild and Scenic River designations occur on the North Fork Crooked River and Crooked River below Bowman Dam (Prineville Reservoir).

At the time that WSA's were created, some of the criteria for the designation included land areas greater than 5000 acres, exhibited apparent naturalness and solitude. WSA's were inventoried between 1979 and 1993 and if the lands met the basic characteristics they were included on the list which BLM then sent to Congress (who has the authority to move the list forward). Congress has failed to act on the list resulting in these lands (WSA's) being in limbo and thus managed as pseudo-wilderness areas.

Travel characteristics within WSA and Wilderness areas depends. Mike Anderson (BLM) stated that BLM doesn't actively maintain routes within WSA's. If an area is declared Wilderness, then routes become non-motorized or would be removed from the final wilderness designation. An example is the Badlands, all motorized routes became non-motorized trails. 2-track routes may or may not be authorized for motorized travel, authorization is dependent on maps available from BLM. BLM tries to sign all open routes, signage would state whether use is specific to a certain type of vehicle and dates of travel that are authorized. Some roads are only open for specific uses (ex. grazing permit administration) and are not open for public use within a WSA. Mike recommended that the public use BLM printed maps or downloaded apps for most current travel information.

Ston shared his concern that these areas have been on the books for over 40 years. 12.5 million acres west wide that have WSA designation. Ston asked if BLM is doing anything to move WSA's to either a Wilderness designation or get them off the list. Amanda responded that under FLPMA, BLM's responsibility was to review and submit to congress, lands that meet the minimum standards. Congress is responsible for the final designations. Tim asked about being able to conduct various land management practices on lands with WSA overlays. As an example, juniper work in sage grouse habitats. Amanda responded that WSA's do have limitations to management. Workloads are focused on areas where it is easier to get through the process. Andy responded that none of ODF&W's habitat maps have these areas included due to the presence of juniper on the landscape.

Amanda provided information on wild and scenic river designations within the County. There are 3 sections in Crook County. Designations are to protect the streams free flowing nature, water quality and its outstanding remarkable values. Lands a quarter mile on each side of the designated stream are included within the designation. A total of 48.5 miles of Crooked River are designated either for recreation, scenic or wild. Both BLM and Forest Service have administrative responsibilities for parts of that 48.5 miles.

Public questions:

Cliff Kiser asked about the 23 segments of new streams within the County that are being proposed under the Wyden/Merkley bill. Mike responded that Senate staff have asked for summaries of what inventories have been done within the District. Some of the streams nominated have been nominated without inventory information. Chris Ryan (BLM) responded that within the newer Basin plans, 80 % of the John Day Basin streams have been inventoried. Within the Brother/La Pine RMA, the south fork of the Crooked River was mentioned as having characteristics worth further study.

Committee Business:

Tim provide an overview of the subcommittee work on committee membership. Subcommittee members were Frank, Ston and Lynne. The subcommittee met to review the 8 applications applying for

the 3 open vacancies on the Committee. The subcommittee recommends the following 3 individuals be recommended to the County Court for appointment:

Cliff Kiser

Jace Rhoden

Casey Kaiser

Mike moved to accept the subcommittee recommendation and forward the three names to the County. John seconded. Motion passed. Lynne stated that all 8 of the applicants were outstanding, making selection very difficult.

Committee member reports/Good of the Order

None

Public Comment:

None

Andy moved to adjourn. Mike seconded. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.