

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

December 8, 2021

Committee Members Present: John Dehler, Lynne Breese, Cliff Kiser, Steve McGuire, Ston McDaniel, Tim Deboodt, Mike Lunn, Frank Profily

Members absent: Trent Smith, Jace Rhoden, Casey Kiser, Andy Gallagher

Guests present: Jeff Kitchens (BLM), Slater Turner (FS), Mike Rall (BLM), Nick Weber (BLM), Kevin Keown (FS)

Public Present: Gayle Hunt

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of previous meeting minutes:

Mike presented additions to the November, 10 2021 meeting meetings which he thought better reflected the context of the presentation he made to the Committee. John moved to accept the minutes as corrected. Cliff seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Agency reports:

Forest Service: Slater Turner told the Committee that the FS is moving forward with summarizing (conducting content analysis) the public comments received during the extended scoping period for the Lemon Gulch Trail project.

FS held a field trip with Central Oregon Land Watch on Mill Creek to discuss the various findings/treatment proposals for the Mill Creek Vegetation Management project.

The Decision Notice on the Frog Fire Restoration project was signed, there are a few logs left to remove from the project area that were from the hazard tree removal project. The Grandview danger tree project is moving forward with field work being accomplished.

FS is in the process of hiring for next year's (2022) fire crews. Other seasonal and temporary positions will be hired starting in February. Cliff Kiser asked if the size of the Hot Shot crews was increasing to 30 people? Slater responding that they are shooting for 26.

Frank asked about the opportunities for the public to get firewood on the north side of Ochoco Summit. Slater indicated that firewood season had closed on November 25th. Frank wondered if these sites were being promoted?

Frank said he had heard that the wild horses were not being collected due the lack of being able to get horse panels. Slater responded that the FS had ordered new panels but that the panels were not available from the supplier. Slater did say that once the new equipment arrives the FS will look for

opportunities to collect again. Mike asked if there was still a proposal to move temporary fire hires to a permanent status. Slater indicated that both are increasing.

Kevin Keown reported that the North Fork Crooked River planning effort is moving forward. Brianna is summarizing project findings currently. Walton Lake project is scheduled for a court briefing in February, 2022. The Big Summit Wild Horse Plan is being litigated. Starting in May, 2022 firewood permits will be free. Christmas tree permits are available from several local business as well as on-line. Kevin reviewed a few of the benefits of the Nov. 2021 infrastructure bill that passed Congress and was signed by the President. Frank asked if the logging injunctions placed in the valley would be affecting operations on the Ochoco. Kevin responded by saying no, no affect locally.

Kevin responded to questions about the Lemon Gulch project that the FS is moving forward with the NEPA analysis of the proposed Lemon Gulch project. FS had conveyed that information to the County back in November.

BLM Report: Jeff Kitchens introduced Mike Ralls and Nick Weber to the Committee (joined by Zoom). BLM is also in a hiring phase for temporary summer positions for the 2022 work season. BLM is working on budget and project planning for the summer work season. Prescribed burning is proceeding as weather permits. BLM is still working with partner agencies to coordinate activities and jurisdictional concerns.

Questions were asked about when Federal offices would once again be open to the public? Kevin responded that the FS is working on plans to begin opening starting on Jan 3, 2022. He did not know how many employees would be allowed back into the building. Telework agreements are being written for employees who will still be working from remote locations. The newest COVID variant may change plans. Still no decision on the ability of FS employees to interact with public in face to face meetings.

Jeff reported that BLM has received 1 message on reopening. BLM is still working on a plan. BLM will probably use similar protocols as FS.

Old Business:

Draft BLM transportation maps: Jeff indicated that the purpose of the new maps is to clarify information found in existing management plans. Maps are not showing any new changes that would require a public involvement process. A total of 24 maps have been updated. Ston reported that the subcommittee met with BLM in early December and that it was a very productive meeting. Ston noted that some additional edits were suggested by the sub-committee. Maps still make it difficult for the public to see how to legally access public lands. Roads on public lands that have no private land access should be highlighted somehow. Another meeting with the sub-committee needs to be scheduled.

Lynne asked how new maps would be distributed. Jeff indicated that initial release will be slow. Getting a response from the public as to suitability. Kiosks at public entry points will be established. Ston said he had met with Kim Daniels (Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce Director) and she indicated a willingness to help any way possible. Ston indicated that some State Recreation/Tourism dollars might be available to assist in a public information campaign. Mike said he appreciated the new

maps and responsiveness to the sub-committee and general public by the BLM. It won't be the solution to the private land trespass issues but it will help.

Committee Member Updates:

Cliff commented on the FS plans for the North Fork Crooked River project. He wondered if any follow-up had been done to see if any recommended solutions from the PFC survey's in the 2000's had solved the problems identified in that report.

Cliff asked Kevin about the Category 4 Riparian Habitat Critical Areas. During a field trip with the Collaborative, they looked at a more upland type, not a true riparian area. Cliff expressed concern that we view CAT 4 as riparian areas (comparable to live stream areas) than as uplands. Cliff felt that mechanical treatments should be allowed in RHCA's regardless to category #.

Tim provided an update to a meeting in November with the Assoc. of Oregon Counties. Infrastructure bill includes 8 billion dollars for water work in the 17 western states. Includes, water efficiency projects, water storage projects and headwater watershed/forest health work. No directions yet from any of the federal agencies on how that money would be specifically spent.

Public Comments:

Gayle Hunt thanked Mike Lunn for interjecting Wayne Elmore and his expertise into the conversation about riparian area management. She remembers Wayne making the comment years ago, that no one living today has seen a healthy riparian area. Gayle encouraged the Committee to invite Wayne to a meeting to talk about riparian management.

No other comments, John moved to adjourn the meeting. Cliff seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.