

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

February 9, 2022

Committee Members Present: John Dehler, Lynne Breese, Tim Deboodt, Mike Lunn, Frank Porfily, Andy Gallagher Casey Kiser, Steve McGuire, Cliff Kiser, Jace Rhoden

Members absent: Trent Smith, Ston McDaniel

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

Public Present: Jerry Brummer, Barb Smith, Mike Ervin, John Breese

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 moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Lynne Seconded. Motion passed.

Agency Reports:

BLM: Jeff Kitchens reported that BLM hopes that with the up-coming March meeting of the NRAC, that BLM officials will be able to participate in-person. Jeff reported that BLM is getting a lot of prescribed burning done with the mild winter, taking advantage of the weather conditions. With noted increases in public use of public lands, there has been an increase in both recreational use and garbage dumping. Wildlife closures for winter are now in effect. These are annual seasonal closures. BLM is getting reports of trespass onto private lands from BLM managed public lands. This includes increased ATV issues associated with the trespass. BLM is continuing to work with partners in informing the public.

Jeff reported that he did not have any new additional information for the Grizzly Mtn area but hopes to have a full report for the March meeting. Jeff asked for help in identifying contacts (people) for helping them collect information on irrigation infrastructure crossing BLM managed lands. Different types of federal legislation authorized such infrastructure but it is important to know what legislation was used for each crossing so that BLM can properly reply to requests for maintenance and upgrades of that infrastructure. John Dehler mentioned that for Ochoco Irrigation District, Bruce Scanlon would be the contact.

Jeff reported briefly on the Sage Grouse plan review that is occurring west-wide. 2015 an initial decision and recovery plan was developed. In 2018, the federal court rulings updated some parts of the plans. BLM has started the scoping process and over the next couple of months, there will be numerous opportunities for public participation. Tim mentioned that Crook County had received a letter from the State BLM Office, inviting Crook County to participate as a Cooperating Agency. Following additional discussion, Jeff offered to facilitate a presentation by BLM at the March NRAC meeting.

Forest Service: Slater Turner reported that by the end of March, some staff will be returning to the office. The plan is to have as many people as possible working from the office by May 14th. There will

still be some FS personnel working remotely. Temporary hiring is continuing on the Forest for the summer work season. So far, 28 new hires have been completed in the areas of fire, botany, heritage, hotshots, etc. Hiring for permanent fire positions is still on-going. All hiring should be complete by May. Hotshot group is growing to 30 individuals. Expansion of the crews will allow for better time management of work and time off. FS is starting prescribed burning on the Grasslands.

Internally, FS is working on records management and over the next couple of years, will be digitizing all paperwork. Mike Lunn asked about record archives. In his career with the FS, records were archived every 10 years. There was not a good system in place to know where those old files went and how to retrieve them when they were needed.

Frank asked about the article in the Bend Bulletin regarding wildfire and the need to reduce tree densities as high as 80 percent of current conditions. Frank wanted to know what Slater thought. Slater had not seen the article but any changes to forest management would need to go through the NEPA process and any new science justifying changes to tree density/cover would be examined then.

Frank asked if there was an update on the Wild Horse Management plan and gatherings? Slater responded with no, no updates.

Mike asked about the Forest Service's Wildfire Crisis Implementation plan. How would it guide work within the Forest? Crook County, in that plan, is not in the most severe areas, therefore it would not be initially in the scope of work. Mike mentioned that Jerry Franklin had developed a management plan for the Klamath/Modoc tribes calling for the adoption of a Pine tree density of 40 – 60 basal area index. The forest would appear to be savannah like in nature with this tree density. Mike also asked if there were any plans on how to utilize the woody material produced as a result of implementing these new wild fire plans and the need to reduce density. Slater said that would all be reviewed during the development of plans and decision would come as a result of NEPA. Work force issues (lack of staff) may be the greatest barrier to implementation.

John Breese asked about the increase in permanent hires for fire and what would those people do in the off-season. Slater indicated that there really didn't seem to be an off season anymore, with some staff in the Carolina's currently helping conduct burns there. Staff may be involved in recruiting, training and for some, taking some much needed time off.

Committee Member updates:

Steve brought up the email from Tim regarding the federal legislation HR 1755, The Northern Rockies Protection Act. Steve indicated that he liked the letter from Baker County as a response to this federal legislation. The Act would set aside approximately 23 million acres west wide (Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon). After much discussion, Mike moved to ask the County to oppose HR1755. Lynne seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Tim will draft a letter for the County's approval.

Lynne indicated that she had been talking to the new Dean of the College of Forestry, OSU Tom DeLuca. He indicated that he was interested in getting OSU involved in some east-side forest research. Lynne proposed that the Committee invite Dr. DeLuca to one of our meetings to discuss research possibilities as well as having the opportunity to have him see this part of the State. The Committee was supportive of the idea, Lynne, Steve and Tim will extend an invite to him.

Public Comments:

Jerry Brummer asked for a little clarification of the County letter regarding HR1755. If the Association of Eastern Oregon Counties wrote a joint letter of opposition, did the Committee want the County to support that or write their own letter? The Committee felt the County should do both.

Elections:

Mike Lunn moved to nominate Steve McGuire and Lynne Breese as Chair and Vice-chair respectively. Casey seconded. Mike moved to close nominations and cast a unanimous vote for Steve and Lynne. John seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Andy moved to adjourn the Committee meeting. Casey seconded. Motion passed.