

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

January 12, 2022

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

Members absent: Trent Smith, Jace Rhoden, Cliff Kiser, Steve McGuire

Guests present: Jeff Kitchens (BLM), Slater Turner (FS), Mike Decker (BLM), Kevin Keown (FS)

Public Present: Jerry Brummer, Melinda Kestler

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by vice-chair Lynne Breese @ 4H Building.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of previous meeting minutes: John moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Andy Seconded. Motion passed.

Agency Reports:

BLM: Mike Decker (Deputy District Manager, Prineville District) introduced himself and indicated that he was sitting in for Amanda Roberts (John Day Area Resource Manager, Prineville District). Mike reported that BLM had completed a prescribed fire treatment on approximately 1550 acres in the Cold Springs unit. Jeff Kitchens reported that vandalism on public lands was increasing. Theft of fee boxes at campgrounds was significant and that BLM was working with Oregon State Police and Oregon State Parks to raise awareness.

Jeff talked about the management of the Grizzly Mtn area. The top of Grizzly Mtn (BLM managed) is home to numerous communication towers and supporting equipment. Other issues recently raised include fuels management, grazing and recreational use. Recreation use continues to be high on the lower Crooked River.

Ston asked Jeff to clarify the concerns on Grizzly Mtn. Jeff talked about the increase fuel loads (woody) and that with the adoption of new communication technology, there might be some overlap (signal disruption) between tower owners. John asked if that issue was not the responsibility of FCC? Lynne asked how many towers/leasee's there are on Grizzly. Jeff said he would find out and report back during the Feb. meeting.

Andy asked Jeff about the SWCD request for the water delivery project in Powell Butte. Andy expressed frustration over lack of communication and direction coming out of BLM. Andy asked who is the appropriate point of contact for moving this project forward? Mike Decker responded that there might need to be clarification as to the best procedure. Jeff said that with the volume of emails coming into the office, the best method of communicating with him is to call his cell number. (541) 350-5955.

Mike Lunn asked about public access to the top of Grizzly. Jeff responded that the road is a public road, but that maintenance is limited. John Dehler mentioned that the power-line road is not a public road and that there is a lot of private lands (mixed ownerships) that the Grizzly Mtn. road touches.

FS: Kevin Keown mentioned that the Ochoco Forest Collaborative was recently informed by COIC that it would no longer be providing facilitation and group support to the Collaborative. The existing agreement would be expiring on March 1, 2022. COIC is having some staffing changes with people leaving for new jobs and COIC's role would be changing. Scott Aycock (COIC) will be assuming the role of facilitator temporarily.

Kevin talked briefly about the Shared Stewardship Project between the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests and their partners. The group will be taking advantage of state funding provided by SB762 and doing some cooperative fuels work in Deschutes County on both private and public lands. FS is working on some heritage work funded by PACE on the grasslands, North Fork Crooked River project and the Steep Slopes pilot project. The Steep Slopes Pilot Project still needs to identify an appropriate site for the project. There is a lot of internal conversations about the new dollars that were a part of the Federal Infrastructure bill (Nov. 2021). The Ochoco National Forest is preparing projects if any of that money comes to them.

Mike Lunn asked if the emphasis on wildland fire issues associated with Wildland Urban Interfaces (WUI's) had gone away. Kevin said he did not know of any reduction of emphasis and in fact the Deschutes work was associated with WUI's. Kevin did mention an emphasis in Tier 1 fire sheds (what are the highest of the high risk areas?). The Ochoco's are not a Tier 1 but are close to one. Slater Turner mentioned that the fire maps produced several years ago are still being used. Jefferson County is updating their WUI plans.

Frank Porfily asked about the trails project. Slater indicated that the ONF is still reviewing all the public input from scoping and that the NEPA process is moving forward for that project.

Slater talked about the FS entering a hiring phase for summer 2022 work. Hiring begins the week of January 18th. Original plan was complete fire hires before beginning the rest of the hiring process but some fire hiring is continuing.

Slater mentioned that for the Lookout Mtn District, the next area to receive a major planning review is the Upper Trout Creek Watershed. He shared that the Danger Tree Sale for the Grandview fire did not sell. FS is looking at how to repackage that proposal and put it back out for public bid.

Frank mentioned that he had recently traveled the 42 road and a couple of its spur roads and didn't see any horses. He asked if the FS had started any gathers. Slater responding by saying no, the FS had not started any gathers. Frank asked what happens if the FS starts gathers prior to the Judge's ruling before it. Slater responded that the FS would follow the judge's orders. Currently there is no injunction on gathers in the Ochoco National Forest.

Tim asked Kevin about the Bell Whether project. Kevin indicated that the FS has signed a categorical exclusion for the project but nothing has moved forward yet.

Ston asked if there had been any clarification to the County's knowledge of the FS moving forward with the Lemon Gulch Trail Project NEPA review. Tim said he talked to the Court and the FS did mention to them in a presentation in November that they were moving forward with the NEPA on Lemon Gulch.

Committee Reports:

Andy shared some SWCD activities. SWCD is working with Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF). There is a program available to private landowners with less than 640 acres of timber to seek cost share assistance on fuel treatments. The Small Grant review team will be meeting again in February to review projects funded by OWEB. Under the Small Grant program, cost share dollars up to \$15,000 are available to landowners for a variety of watershed improvement projects. The SWCD continues to work with landowners in the County developing sage grouse management plans and seeking dollars to help with the implementation of those plans. The SWCD is also working on a joint forestry project in the upper Crooked River area with ODF and the Nature Conservancy.

Lynne shared that this winter, our area has experienced a significant increase in Robin (bird) population. These birds are consuming juniper berries and helping to create the next generation of juniper trees. "Get out the Loppers"! Lynne shared that Dixie Meadows is supplying juniper trees (whole) to the Deschutes Land Trust project on the north side of Prineville (next to the old radio station). DLT purchased this property and is working on a large riparian restoration project that will realign the Crooked River, Ochoco Creek and McKay Creek as they converge on this property.

Public Comment: None

John moved to adjourn. Andy seconded. Motion Passed.