

## Minutes

### Crook County Natural Resource Committee

August 10, 2022

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

**Members absent:** Trent Smith, Casey Kiser, Jace Rhoden,

**Guests present:** Tim Holschbach (ODF), Russ Deboodt (CCFR), Gordon Foster Jr. (ODF), Amanda Roberts (BLM), Carrie Capp (ODF)

**Public present:** John Breese, Gayle Hunt, Melinda Kestler

**Meeting was called to order** at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Steve McGuire @ COCC Open Campus building.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

**Approval of previous meeting minutes:** John Dehler moved to accept the minutes of the July 13th meeting. Lynne Breese seconded. Motion passed.

#### **Agency Updates:**

Amanda Roberts (BLM) provided the update for her agency. Dennis Teitzel (District Manager) will be leaving the District in early September. He will be assuming similar duties in NW Oregon. The District is working on filling 3 range conservationist jobs. Fire season has started with several lightning strikes occurring in the area.

For the Forest Service report, Tim handed out the report sent to him by Shane Jefferies. All FS staff are on fires throughout the region. Mike Lunn asked about Walton Lake and if any Court decision had been released. Frank mentioned that he had talked to Rep. Cliff Bentz about the proposed wild horse handling facility on the grasslands. Lynne asked Mike if there was any further discussion on the Agency (FS and BLM) effort to define 'old-growth' and 'mature' forests. Mike responded that he thought the public comment period was still open. Tim said he would contact Shane to seek answers to the questions about Walton Lake and the public comment period on the old growth issue.

#### **Agenda Item:**

**Tim Holschbach, ODF Deputy Chief- Policy and Planning was present to talk about ODF's effort to meet the legislative requirements of SB762 (Oregon Wildfire bill) and the requirement to create a Wildfire Risk map for the State of Oregon.** The purpose of the map was to identify high risk landscapes, susceptible to wildfire and to map wildland urban interfaces (WUI's). 4 criteria were used to create the map, topography, weather, climate (climate cycles not global warming issues) and vegetation. Depending on location in the state, one criteria may have been weighted more than the others. The mapping exercise was similar to other mapping systems that assess wildfire risk. OSU provided the mapping service and technical expertise.

As per the Federal Register, ODF adopted language defining WUI's as places with 1 structure per 40 acre. Structures had to be at least 400 sq.ft. in size, 1 structure per tax lot and more than 1 tax lot with structure be contiguous with each other.

From a regulatory standpoint, regulations about building, creating and maintaining fire safe landscapes only pertain to WUI's that have received a high or extreme fire risk classification. Tim estimated that the State has over 1.8 million tax lots. Of those, 600,000 are in WUI's and 150,000 of those were designated as high or extreme under the initial map that was produced and of those 150,000, 80,000 taxlots fell into the regulatory umbrella as being both in a WUI and having a high or extreme fire risk classification.

ODF received 1000's of letter/appeals in the first couple of weeks following the release of the map and letters sent to those taxlots with high or extreme ratings. ODF recognizing some errors in the map, has made the decision to pull the map and address its technical problems. They will be sharing the next version with local governments (ex. County and fire departments) before releasing the next version to the public.

Tim mentioned some of the initial concerns included the use of the fire map by insurance companies to either raise rates or cancel policies. Tim indicated that there were approximately 150 insurance companies licensed in the State of Oregon. The State Insurance Commissioner sent a mandatory response request to them to see how they intended to use the map. It is not legal for insurance companies to use this wildfire risk map.

John Dehler asked about community input into the creation of the map and how were identified Fire Wise communities were mapped? Tim responded that Oregon is #2 in using that program but that information was not a part of the 4 criteria. John also asked how a community like Ochoco West would be rated low risk by the map (high house density, vegetation and topography) yet his irrigated grass field was rated as high risk. Tim responded that these are the types of errors that were identified with the map and is in part, why the map has been pulled and will be reworked.

John then asked how can Crook County residents be helpful in fixing the problems? Tim again emphasized that local governments input will be sought by the Department.

Cliff Kiser expressed that the map may create a new taxing opportunity. Does the bill provide for a new tax that could be assessed based on the fire risk assessment? Tim responded that SB762 removed the authority of ODF to issue a fee for fire protection.

Lynne Breese said she appreciated ODF for responding to citizen concerns and agreed that one positive outcome is that the public is now aware of the mapping process and some of its potential impacts and uses.

John Dehler asked if there was a chance that ODF's fire protection boundaries would change as a result of the map. Tim was not able to answer that question.

### **Review of Canyon 66 Tour**

Andy and Steve were able to participate in this FS sponsored tour. The Canyon 66 fire was a prescribed fire (5000 ac), ignited in September, 2019. The tour included stops that had low, moderate and severe fire response. Andy and Steve mentioned that there was a good mix of stand conditions. They both acknowledged that some trees were killed by the fire but it was minimal and should have been

expected. The tour included lots of discussion amongst the participants and included talking about how goals and objectives had been met by the prescribed fire. Steve noted that the areas of high tree mortality were actually in stands of white fir, thus not much valuable timber had been lost. Cliff mentioned that he remembered from a previous tour that there had been some commercial thinning prior to the burn. Steve also mentioned that the fire created more edge area, thus improved habitat for wildlife.

**Good of the Order:**

Discussion was held on the process for filling Committee vacancies. The process will be the same as last time, at the September meeting, committee members will be asked to nominate Crook County Citizens. Those nominees and any other person interested in being appointed by the Court will receive a letter and packet of information inviting them to apply. Steve appointed Andy (Chair), Lynne and Cliff to a subcommittee to review applications and make recommendations to the Committee.

**Public Comment:**

No public comment

John moved to adjourn the committee. Frank seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.