

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resource Committee

September 14, 2022

Committee Members Present: John Dehler, Andy Gallagher, Lynne Breese, Mike Lunn, Steve McGuire, Tim Deboodt

Members absent: Trent Smith, Casey Kiser, Jace Rhoden, Frank Porfily, Cliff Kiser

Guests present: Stephanie McKinney

Public present: John Breese, Gayle Hunt, Melinda Kestler

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of previous meeting minutes: No action

Agency Updates:

Stephanie McKinney, BLM provided the following updates for the Prineville BLM District. Dennis Teitzel has moved to Salem BLM Office, Amanda Roberts is serving as Interim District Manager, Prineville District. Jeff Kitchens has started his new position as Assistant District Manager and Lisa Clark is filling in as acting Area Resource Manager, Deschutes Resource Area. BLM is conducting a public comment period on their draft land acquisition plan for the lower John Day River area. The Deschutes Resource Area is busy with 4 solar farm applications, 3 active resort applications and other projects. They are without a lands/realty person so projects are difficult to complete. Most of the solar farm applications are in the Powell Butte area, off of Millican Road. Resort applications are Thornburg, Remington and Hidden Canyon.

John Dehler asked how mule deer mitigation will be done for future solar farm developments. Stephanie responded that ODF&W will be involved in that discussion. Development areas are classified as general deer winter range. Mike Lunn asked what involvement the BLM was engaged in related to the resorts? Where the issues just right-of-way access or something more? Stephanie said she would follow up.

John Breese asked about the Cowboy fire up Juniper Canyon. What does restoration look like on disturbed sites (cat trails, fire lines, etc)? There was a general concern about weeds. Mike Lunn thought it was general agency policy to rehabilitate all cat lines prior to equipment leaving.

Shane Jefferies, Ochoco NF was not present but provided a FS written report (attached to these minutes). Gayle Hunt asked if the cattle guard replacement project, which indicated replacement was based on a priority list addressing health and safety concerns, if those safety concerns included wildlife issues? Tim will forward the question on to Shane for his response.

New Business:

Discussion was held on the filling of vacancies on the Advisory Committee. Since a quorum did not exist, those in attendance decided to table this issue until the October meeting. John Dehler did announce that he would not be seeking reappointment to the Committee when his term expires December, 31 2022.

Mike Lunn discussed the newly released National Forest Service policy review on the use of prescribed fire. Mike reviewed the set of circumstances that triggered the review in the spring of 2022. The Chief of the Forest Service suspended the use of prescribed fire as a management tool until the review was completed. The review only covered Forest Service policy. It did not include all federal land management agencies in the review (BLM, National Park Service, etc).

Mike provided a 1 page review of the recommendations found in the recently published review (attached). There are 7 recommendations. What is not clear from the review is what will be the actual impacts on the landscape? Will some managers decide that the new policies are too restrictive resulting in increased costs and less action? It was generally thought that the new policy adds complexity to the ability to burn. Hopefully at the October meeting, the Ochoco National Forest can provide some update as to how they will be implementing this new directive.

Public Comment:

Gayle Hunt expressed frustration that the local Forest is not able to collect good information about current conditions on the forest. An example she provided was the Canyon 66 project in which the EIS clearly stated what the ignition requirements were but instead chose to use ping pong ignition. The EIS was old news (conducted several years before the fire) and changes in the forest condition were not factored in.

John Breese expressed frustration that agencies don't provide incentives for employees to stay at a location long enough to know the resource and to see the results of their management decisions. It appears that the agencies (as an example) take people away from their jobs, detailing them to other locations and disrupting their work. As a result, project implementation is disjointed and takes way too much time.

Good of the Order:

Committee member reports:

John Dehler shared with the group a field tour he participated in as a representative of the Ochoco Chapter, Oregon Hunters Assoc. The tour's purpose was to review proposed road closures connected to the North Fork Crooked River Vegetation Management project. Tour participants were Brianna Goehring (FS), Robbie Piehl (FS), Greg Jackal (ODFW), Joe Dehler (OHA) and John Dehler (OHA). John reported that the tour discussion was about how to keep up to 2000 head of elk on the Forest and off of private lands below the forest boundary.

The tour reviewed proposed road closures on the east end of the project and the middle area. Due to the 42 Rd being closed, they were not able to see the area on the west end. The proposed closure on the east end (650 Rd) would be done by adding a 1 gate (2 gates already exist in this area). It was recommended that the 700 Rd be added to the 'Green Dot' system to allow for hunter access into this

area. It was recommended that the 300 Rd not be closed because this is the only public access to a parcel of land administered by BLM. There is no other access to this piece of public land.

No other Committee member reports:

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.