

Minutes

Crook County Natural Resources Committee

July 9, 2025

Committee Members Present: Bill McCormack, Andy Gallagher, Frank Porfily (via Zoom), Mike Lunn, Lynne Breese, Calista Songstad, Tim Deboodt, Melinda Kestler, Steve McGuire,

Members Absent: Casey Kaiser, Kim Vogel, Cliff Kiser

Guests Present: Jeff Marszel (FS), Isabella Isaksen (FS), Kyle Hensley (BLM)

Public Present: Gayle Hunt, John Breese, Scott Johnson (Central Oregon Rancher), Jodie Schiffman (Zoom)

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes: Lynne Breese moved to approve minutes of June 11, 2025 regular meeting. Bill McCormack seconded. Votes Yes: McGuire, Breese, Songstad, Kestler, Porfily, Lunn, McCormack, Gallagher. Votes No: None

Agency Updates: Jeff Marszel, Ochoco National Forest Supervisor provided the update for the Forest Service. The Forest has had an active fire season since the June meeting. FS staff is getting focused on a new program of work, identifying community interests and assuring the Plan of Work closely aligns with these interests. Jeff shared that staffing for current fire needs is good so far.

Post funding for fire recovery has received some Burned Area Emergency Report (BAER) funding, will be replacing 90 miles of fence within the Crazy Creek Fire area and is working on getting additional dollars for the balance of fencing to include Wiley Flats and Rail Ridge fire areas.

Timber program is implementing reforestation efforts across the 3 fire areas from 2024. The Coyote Sale (Wiley Flat Fire) was a NO SALE. FS will be restructuring sale for rebid and will include a lower base bid requirement. FS is consulting with American Forest Resource Council (AFRC) in regards to sale structure, sale timing and a recognition that haul routes for logs makes the economics of the sale difficult for industry.

Jeff shared that road crews are wrapping up spring work and that the 22 RD to Walton Lake paving project will be finishing soon.

Executive Orders to increase timber outputs will result in Ochoco Forest requirements going from 13 mbft to 17 mbft by 2027. Next project areas that will be planned for are Mountain Creek Watershed and Trout Creek Watershed. Tim asked if the FS could revisit decision notices for Mill Creek and North Fork Crooked River since planning was accomplished but Decision Notices reduced scope of work.

NEPA regulations will be significantly changing as a result of recent USDA decisions. Forest Service will no longer have its own, separate regulations/processes and instead will have Departmental (USDA) Direction. This change is effective July 8, 2025.

Roadless Area Rules (in place since the Clinton Administration, 1994) are no longer in place. This rule set aside large blocks of roadless areas, taking these areas away from timber management and harvest. The Secretary of Agriculture rescinded the rule. A new rule will need to be written before active management can occur on these lands.

Kyle Hensley, Central Oregon Resource Area Manager shared the BLM update. Kyle talked about the Sunrise Fire in the South Fork Crooked River and it is mostly in a Wilderness Study Area. Terrain and WSA designation limit firefighting options. As a result of recent thunderstorm activity, there were 21 official fire starts yesterday (7/8/2025).

Fire rehabilitation continues with last year's fires. Recent signed Decisions authorize seeding and herbicide treatments for both the Crazy Creek and Rail Ridge fires. BLM is working to complete a fence survey (damaged/need to be replaced) prior to any funds being spent.

The Crazy Creek Salvage sale, (2nd effort) was a no bid. Minimum sale price was \$ 0.01/ton. Speculation for why no sale: more pine in the volume being offered and few mills working with pine, the Pilot Rock Mill announcing its closure and the Prairie City Mill fire. Tim suggested that BLM reach out to AFRC to see how industry would suggest sale be reconfigured.

Kyle shared that BLM is also redoing NEPA regulations. Currently there are no specifics. The purpose will be to improve efficiency and effectiveness of NEPA. BLM has recently been adopting other Agency NEPA rules to improve their process. An example is their expanded use of Categorical Exclusions to move projects forward.

Kyle also mentioned that BLM got an OWEB grant to pay ODF&W for cultural services on the Sanford Creek Project. Cooperative work is being conducted under the Good Neighbor Authority.

BLM is working with the Flat Rock Road District to authorize a Right of Way for residential access to this subdivision across public lands administered by BLM. With the completion of this ROW, for providing a 2nd access point to Juniper Canyon, there remains only 1 parcel of private ownership to negotiate with.

Agenda Items:

Proposed By Law Changes:

Tim reviewed the process which has resulted in a need to update bylaws. The majority of changes are editorial including the change from "County Court" to County Board of Commissioners. Change to direct attention to include the Section on Membership (Section 3), laying out the possibility of City of Prineville to recommend a representative to the County for appointment, and the Section on Conduct Of Meetings (Section 11E) recording of meetings.

After discussion, Andy moved to adopt the Bylaw changes as presented with clarification as outlined by Calista. Bill Seconded. Voting yes: Lunn, Breese, Kestler, Gallagher, McCormack, McGuire, Porfily, Songstad. Voting No: None

Good of the Order:

Mike Lunn asked for an update on the FS acquisition of the eastern half of Big Summit Prairie. FS responded that they are not pursuing this.

Andy Gallagher shared with the Committee that the 7 Soil and Water Conservation Districts which received State monies during the 2023 Oregon Legislative session will again be getting juniper control dollars from the 2025 session. Crook County will be receiving approximately 1.2 million dollars. The Governor needs to sign the bill. Crook County SWCD is not yet aware of any State imposed requirements for the spending of this money. In regards to this conversation, Lynne Breese asked if there was anything the Committee can do to engage with the City of Prineville on its work to cite a BioMass (wood fired) Energy facility. The group reviewed their work from previous meetings (presentations, recommendations to the County, support for juniper work). No new action recommended.

Public Comment:

Gayle Hunt spoke about the NEPA changes in FS and BLM. She expressed frustration with the changes, shared that the original Act clearly spelled out the role of Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) and asked the representatives today to clarify, that there will be 2, Agency driven (US Department of Interior (BLM), and US Department of Agriculture (FS)) processes. Both Kyle and Jeff said as far as they knew now, that the answer was yes. Jeff reminded the group that the changes just came out yesterday (July 8) and clarity as to the changes will be coming out very soon.

Mike Lunn moved to adjourn the meeting. Bill Seconded. Votes yes: McGuire, Porfily, Songstad, Kestler, McCormack, Breese, Lunn and Gallagher. Votes no: none

Meeting adjourned 2:15 p.m.



Crook County Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Ochoco National Forest & Crooked River National

Grassland

July 09, 2025

I. Overview

The Ochoco National Forest continues to adapt to evolving priorities at both the USDA and national Forest Service levels. As direction shifts, staff are actively working to interpret and implement these changes in a way that reflects local values and operational realities. While many priorities remain aligned, others require adjustments in focus, timelines, or capacity. The Forest is taking a measured approach—evaluating new guidance, revisiting program goals, and ensuring that available resources are directed toward the highest-priority work that benefits both the land and the communities we serve.

II. 2024 Fire Recovery and Rehabilitation

Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) funding has been awarded for the Crazy Creek, Wiley Flat, and Rail Ridge Fires. Forest staff are now preparing contract packages to implement previously identified priority work. This includes roadside hazard tree abatement, fence repair, water development restoration, and protection of wildlife exclosures. These treatments are aimed at reducing post-fire risks to public safety, infrastructure, and natural resources. Contracting efforts are underway, and implementation will begin as conditions and timelines allow.

III. 2025 Fire Season Outlook

The Forest enters the 2025 fire season with strong initial attack capacity and continued interagency coordination through Central Oregon Fire Management Service (COFMS). While some permanent support positions remain unfilled, many will be supplemented through administratively determined (AD) hires and detailed personnel. Fire staff have expressed confidence in current staffing levels and overall preparedness. Seasonal hiring concluded on schedule, and hand crews and engines are well staffed.

IV. Projects and Forest Management

- 3 Fires Reforestation Initiative: Under development to replant native, fire-adapted species in high mortality areas within the 2024 Crazy Creek, Wiley Flat, and Rail Ridge Fire footprints. The project prioritizes areas with over 75% tree mortality.
- Lower Derr Restoration Project: Aims to improve watershed health in the Jackson and Derr Creek areas through beaver dam analogs, native riparian plantings, large woody debris





placement, meadow restoration, and fencing improvements.

- Mill Creek and North Fork Crooked River Projects: Implementation is underway following final NEPA decisions.
- Jackson Fuel Break Project: Decision signed in April 2025; treatments will begin this season.
- Sunflower Restoration Project: Progressing with thinning contracts awarded this spring.

V. Timber Sales

- Coyote RS Salvage Sale: The Coyote RS Salvage Sale, located within the Wiley Flat Fire footprint, went no-bid last week. The Forest plans to reoffer the sale on Monday.
- Two additional deck sales are expected to be advertised within the next few weeks.
- The Slab Timber Sale and Detour Salvage Sale are scheduled to be advertised in Q1 of FY26.

VII. Roads & Infrastructure

The Forest's Road Crew, supported by engineers from the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests, is currently patching paved roads across the Forest. This critical maintenance effort is expected to continue for the next one to two weeks. Drivers should anticipate minor delays and heavy equipment activity during this period.

Stay up-to-date with forest information by visiting: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/ochoco> or follow us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/OchocoNatForestCrookedRiverNatGrassland>

To have your email added to the Forest's project mailing list, please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ochoco/landmanagement/projects> and enter your email in the "Email Updates" box. You will then begin to receive notification of project announcements such as public comment periods. This link also provides information for all current planning projects.

